

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.

May 15, 2024

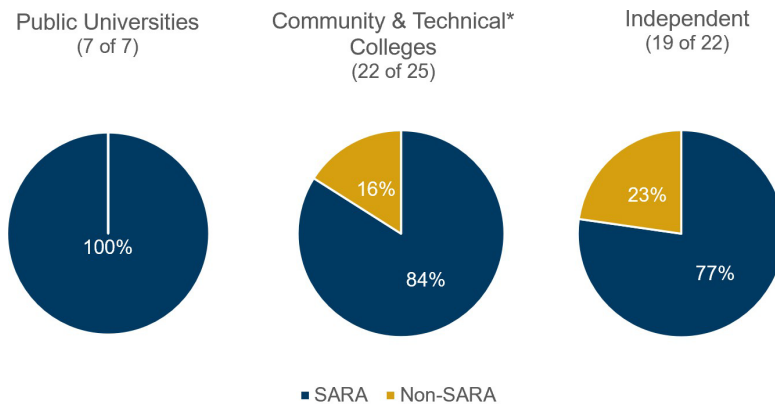
Background

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 2022, over four million students were enrolled exclusively in distance education, with one and a half million administered through SARA. These enrollments are relatively stable from the previous year, although there was a slight decrease of less than one percent.

As of March 1, 2024, 49 Kansas institutions participate in SARA. Over the past year, KBOR has approved the participation of three additional institutions and removed one institution due to its change of home state. The charts below illustrate participation by sector.¹



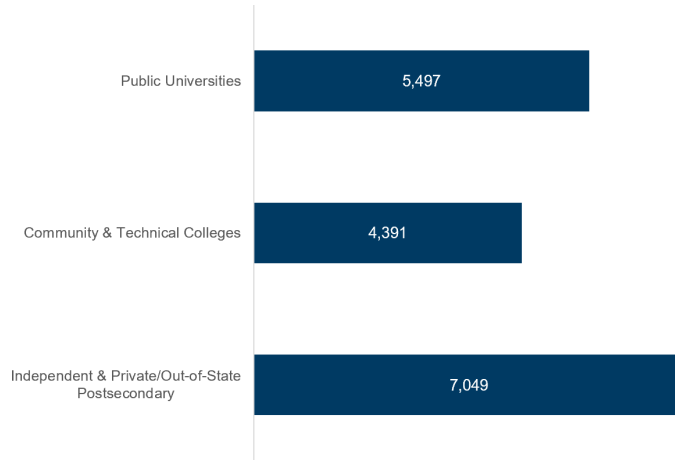
*Washburn University Institute of Technology participates under the approval of Washburn University and is not included in this count

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

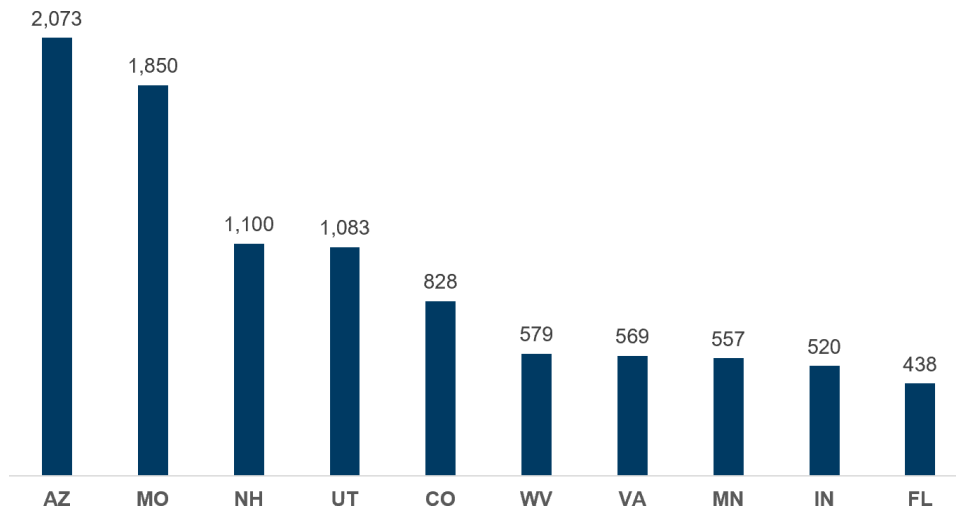
The Fall 2022 exclusively distance education enrollments and 2022 calendar year out-of-state learning placements for participating Kansas institutions are provided below.

In Fall 2022, nearly 17,000 out-of-state students were enrolled in participating Kansas SARA institutions.



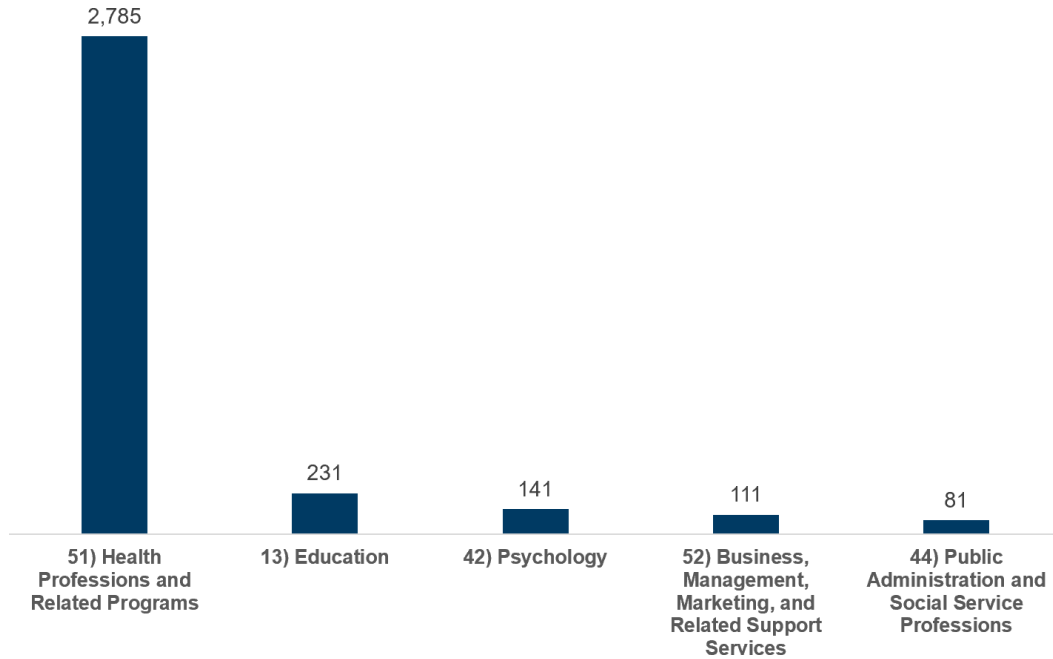
The top three locations from which Kansas institutions enroll students are Missouri, Texas, and non-SARA member states and territories.

In Fall 2022, over 14,000 Kansans were enrolled in distance education offered in another SARA member state. The top ten enrollments by state are listed below.

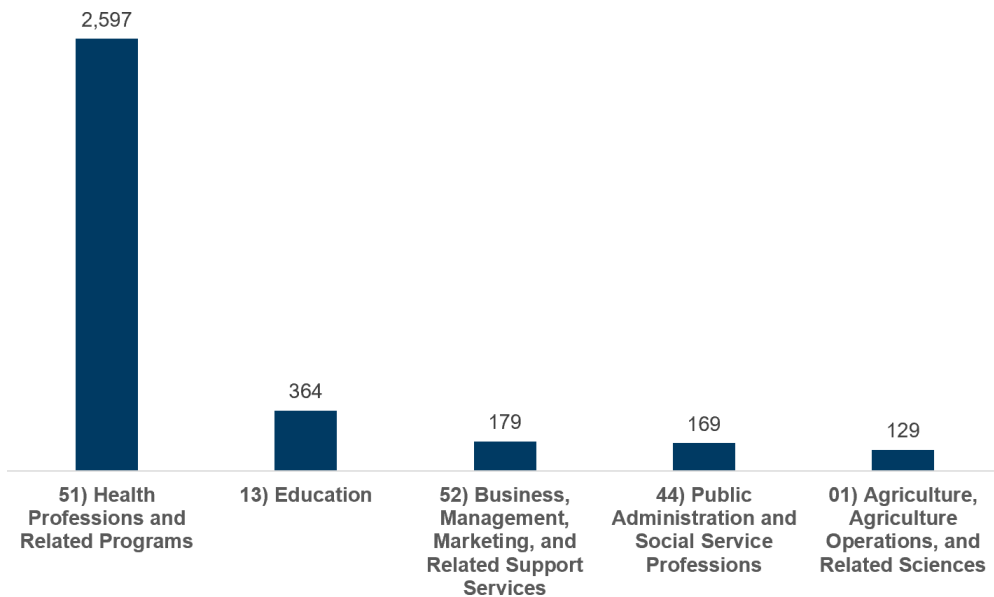


Southern New Hampshire University (New Hampshire), Western Governors University (multiple locations), and Penn Foster College (Arizona) are the top three institutions enrolling Kansans.

In the 2022 calendar year, over 3,900 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.

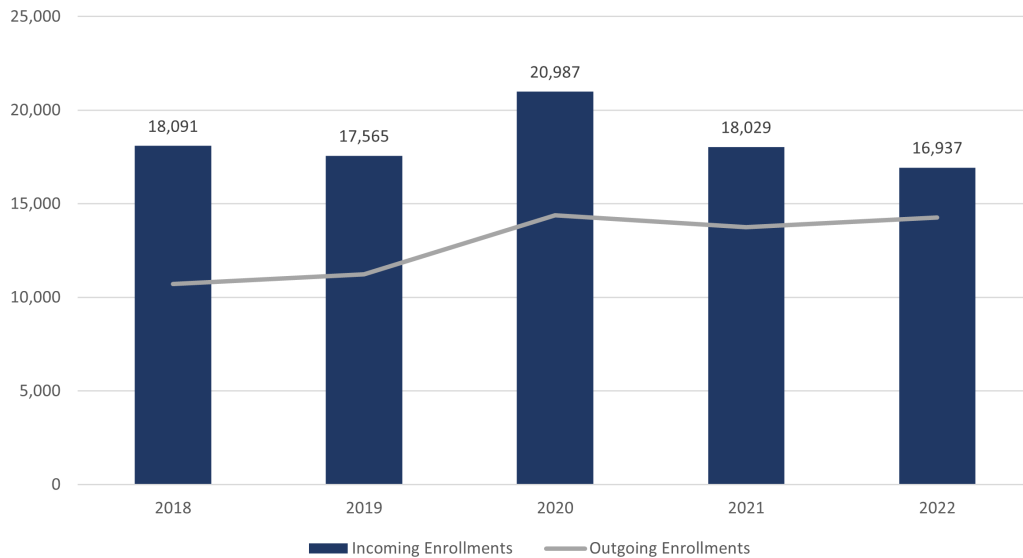


In the 2022 calendar year, Kansas institutions placed over 4,100 students out-of-state. The chart below illustrates placements in the top five CIP codes.



Enrollment Trend Data

NC-SARA has standardized its data collection methods in recent years, providing an opportunity to review enrollment data over time. 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.



We anticipate a decrease in incoming enrollment for 2023 due to the change of ownership of Grantham University, which previously was domiciled in Kansas. Over the last five years, Grantham has averaged incoming enrollments of over 5,000 students.

Policy Modification Process

In October 2023, NC-SARA completed its first cycle of a new policy modification process. This process, approved by the NC-SARA Board in June 2022, was developed by the regional compacts and their respective SARA regional steering committees to encourage transparency, increase collaboration, maintain consistency, and open communication. The most significant development of this new process required that each of the four regional compacts approve a proposed policy modification before consideration by the NC-SARA Board. Over 60 proposals were received from various constituencies, including the steering committees of the regional compacts, the State Authorization Network (SAN), consumer advocacy groups, and institutions. At the Fall 2023 NC-SARA Board Meeting, the Board reviewed six proposals, five of which were approved.

The 2024 policy modification process is currently underway. Most of the proposals intend to clarify current policy, standardize the application of policies across member states, and strengthen consumer protections. Some proposals, if approved, could require states to implement policies that were previously optional. For example, approving an institution in a provisional status due to being on notice or warning with their accreditor is currently not required due to the use of "may" in the current policy language. Changes like these may require the Board to complete a more intensive review of participating institutions. Over the past ten years, the State

Portal Entity review has changed from reviewing the attestation of an institution to comply with SARA policy, to a review and confirmation of compliance.

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

Negotiated Rulemaking

Also on the horizon are new U.S. Department of Education (Department) rules that regulate out-of-state online colleges. The Department wants to give states more authority to enforce their own laws and regulations than what reciprocity agreements currently allow. The efforts of negotiators to reach consensus with the Department failed, and the administration can now write the rules as it sees fit. The process is in a public comment period, but the final rules must be published by October 31, 2024 in order to be effective July 1, 2025.

The data provided in this report is available in interactive dashboards at <https://nc-sara.org/data-dashboards>
This and previous SARA reports are available at http://kansasregents.gov/academic_affairs/sara