



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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CAAL
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Agenda Item 8

May 1, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, and Members of the Committee on Academic Affairs & Licensing

FROM: MaryAnn Janosik, Ph.D., Director of Academic Affairs

Consideration of Preliminary Request to Seek Legislative Change to Participate in State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

BACKGROUND

At its March 6, 2014 meeting, Commissioners heard a presentation on the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), given jointly by Dr. MaryAnn Janosik, CHE's Director of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Debra Jackson, Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs and Assistant to the President at Clemson University. The presentation was given on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP), whose members voted to support South Carolina's application for membership into SARA at its February 20, 2014 meeting.

SARA is a voluntary consortium of states that establishes national standards for institutions offering postsecondary distance education courses and programs to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state.

To join the currently proposed State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, a state must demonstrate to its regional compact—in this case, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) - that the state meets the standards established for participation in the interstate reciprocity agreement. Key actions for a state are to determine that a state agency has the legal authority to sign an interstate agreement governing distance education laws for both public and private colleges. The agency must also have authority to investigate and resolve complaints against all degree-granting institutions in the state. Federal law requires that such processes exist, and a state must provide documentation of such processes to join SARA.

In order for South Carolina to submit a successful application to SARA, CHE staff requests that the Commission authorize it to move forward with the application process by preparing the documents necessary to seek change in its statutory authority that would be necessary to join SARA, if the Commission subsequently elects to do so.

RECOMMENDATION

The staff commends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommend that the Commission authorize the staff to move forward with preparations to seek the legislative change necessary to allow South Carolina to join SARA, so that CHE is eligible to submit its application to SARA in spring 2015, if it chooses at that time to do so.