

LEGAL UPDATES

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Missouri and Kansas Pass Legislation on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements for Distance Education

Missouri is one of the most recent states to pass legislation authorizing an interstate reciprocity agreement for distance education providers. Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon signed House Bill 1389 in June, with the legislation set to go into effect August 28, 2014. Kansas passed similar legislation in March (HB 2544).

Under the new laws, postsecondary institutions in Missouri and Kansas that offer distance classes will be able to enter into reciprocity agreements authorizing operations in other states, rather than be required to seek authorization from each individual state. Although state authorization is necessary for protecting students and institutions, individual state-by-state authorization is a costly, confusing, and time-consuming exercise, one that often overwhelms institutions to the point of refusing to offer classes in certain states.

Reciprocity agreements can provide those same protections and benefits, but at a lower cost and in a streamlined manner by ensuring comparable standards from state to state. The central tenet of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) movement is to make it easier for states to regulate, and for institutions to participate in distance education. More information can be found at <http://nc-sara.org/>.

The next step is for Missouri and Kansas to develop and submit SARA plans to the regional Midwestern Higher Education Compact before institutions are authorized to provide distance education under any reciprocity agreement. Both states are currently in the process of applying. Applications are due by the end of 2014.