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## **New Data Confirms Growing Demand for Distance Education Programs**

*Report released by NC-SARA shows more than 2.8 million students were enrolled in online learning opportunities last year*

**BOULDER, CO** – The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) today released its fourth annual [enrollment report](#) and [dataset](#) illustrating continued growing demand for postsecondary distance education opportunities. According to the [report](#), nearly 1.3 million students were enrolled exclusively in distance education programs at NC-SARA-participating institutions in 2019 – a 5 percent increase over 2018 numbers.

Additionally, the [NC-SARA report](#) also includes [new data](#) on in-state distance education enrollments, which surpassed 1.5 million in 2019, bringing the total number of students enrolled in distance education at NC-SARA institutions nationwide to 2.8 million. [Click here to read the full report and access the dataset.](#)

“It’s vitally important for NC-SARA to continually monitor how the postsecondary landscape is evolving to better meet students’ needs. Distance education programs are creating new, more flexible learning opportunities for students, and we’re pleased to see more institutions developing quality online programming that is accessible to students both locally and across state lines,” said **NC-SARA President and CEO Dr. Lori Williams**.

Key findings from [the report](#) include:

- **Public institutions** made up **53.2% (just over 1.49 million)** of total reported distance education enrollments. Most distance education students at public institutions are located **in-state (1.2 million)**.
- **Private non-profit institutions** represented **29.8% (836,644)** of total reported distance education enrollments. The majority of distance education students at private non-profit institutions are located **out-of-state (569,364)**.
- **Private for-profit institutions** made up **16.9% (475,505)** of total reported distance education enrollments, and two **tribal institutions** represent the remaining 501 enrollments.
- Although **for-profit enrollments** went up slightly over 2018, overall distance education enrollments at for-profit institutions have **declined by over 100,000 since 2017**.

- With **more than 47,000 students** enrolled its online programming, the **University of Maryland Global Campus** has the **largest total distance education enrollment** among public institutions. **Arizona State University** and **Purdue University Global** follow with 36,785 and 30,061 enrollments, respectively.
- **Western Governors University** reported the largest total enrollment among private non-profit institutions (**120,876 distance learning students**).

For the first time, the NC-SARA report also collected information about Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP), which provides insight into in-person distance education programming that students engage in across state lines, such as clinical hours for nursing, practice teaching hours for pre-service teachers, internships, etc. Much like the first year that enrollment data were collected, NC-SARA anticipates that the veracity of the data will improve as institutions become more familiar with the data collection process.

According to the [available data](#), the largest OOSLP distance education program enrollments were in healthcare-related programs (60.5%), followed by education (9.5%) and business (5%) programs.

“NC-SARA is working to continually improve the quality of the data it collects and reports, in an effort to provide meaningful information about the value and prevalence of distance education opportunities in the U.S.,” **Dr. Williams added**. “We look forward to further enhancing next year’s data report with guidance and input from state and institution stakeholders, in hopes this data and report can help inform future state higher education planning efforts.”

To learn more about NC-SARA, [click here](#).

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***The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)*** is a voluntary, interstate reciprocal approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education. The initiative is administered by the country’s four regional higher education compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, SREB and WICHE) and coordinated by NC-SARA. States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states, and better resolution of student complaints. [www.nc-sara.org](http://www.nc-sara.org)