**Comments to the Special Commission on Interstate Reciprocity Agreements**

**Presented by John Cunningham, Ph.D., CEO, UMassOnline**

* Through UMassOnline the UMass campuses offer over 150 online degree and certificate programs, each of which has undergone a full campus and system academic approval processes. Our programs are consistently highly ranked and provide an affordable public distance education option in the national landscape.
* UMassOnline hosts the academic content for over 70,000 enrolled learners, many of them residing out of state or beyond the USA. Many active duty military complete their programs while stationed in several states.
* Without an option for reciprocity such as SARA, each UMass campus pays for the expensive and particular authorization processes in each of 45-48 states, thus substantially overspending and duplicating staff efforts to complete special forms and track status and renewals.
* The SARA agreement enables all public and private higher education institutions that offer distance learning to operate in all SARA states through its reciprocity. This reciprocity substantially reduces the cost and labor of securing individual authorizations to enroll students residing in other states. Currently it costs over $50K annually per institution to get authorization in all the other 49 states. Labor costs for a full time employee for this work is additional.
* We appreciate the concern for consumer protection for MA residents. Reciprocity with adequate consumer protection and recourse action is achievable.
* To date 41 states plus the District of Columbia have joined SARA (including ME, NH, VT and RI) and several more are expected to join by year’s end. States join through their regional higher education entity, NEBHE for MA.
* To paraphrase a comment at a BHE panel held to explore joining SARA: if over 40 states are operating online education delivery under a reciprocity agreement and MA is not participating in (or interacting with) that agreement, then MA soon will not be operating online education.