

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 7, 2016

Secretary James Peyser  
Executive Office of Education  
One Ashburton Place  
Room 1403  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Secretary Peyser:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), a topic of immense importance to the future of innovation and access within higher education here in the Commonwealth. On behalf of Wheelock College, I urge the SARA Special Commission to recommend that the state's Board of Higher Education join 41 other states in becoming part of the SARA initiative. This action would level the playing field for Massachusetts' robust higher education sector, allowing us to compete with distance learning education programs across the country.

As you know, Wheelock College is a private, non-profit institution located in Boston, Massachusetts with a mission to *improve the lives of children and families*. Students who come to Wheelock are passionate about making a difference. They are teachers, social workers, child life specialists and advocates. At Wheelock, students combine their study of the arts and sciences with professional majors and real-world field experience that begins in their first year of study. All of our programs have a social justice focus.

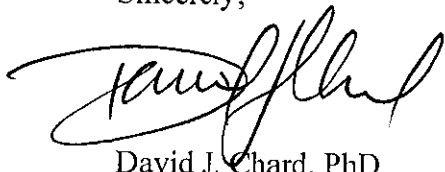
As a recognized international leader in teacher preparation and STEM education, Wheelock views online platforms as a way to bring our expertise in this growing field to educators across the nation. The institution recently launched online learning programs, offering a Master of Science in Education Studies with a focus on STEM as well as two online certificate programs in STEM Education. In partnership with the Boston Public Schools, we have also piloted an online competency-based professional development course. This course has the potential to be transformed into an online advanced degree, targeting working teachers who seek to further their credentials by applying content from Wheelock's virtual classroom to their current preschool, elementary and secondary classroom environments.

As the system currently stands, expanding Wheelock's online offerings would mean obtaining authorization in as many as 49 other states on a state-by-state basis. For a small college like Wheelock with limited administrative capacity, this patch-work system presents a regulatory barrier to growing programs with national competitive potential. The lack of a uniform framework for enrolling students from other states inhibits the enrollment potential of Massachusetts' higher education institutions and, with this, our ability to offer diverse and affordable pathways to higher education.

A recommendation to the Legislature that the Commonwealth should join SARA would be a step towards removing regulatory and costly administrative barriers to innovation, affordability and higher education access. Again, I urge the Special Commission to take such action towards this end.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding these comments or require any further information. The Special Commission can reach me through Julie Bolduc DeFilippo, Wheelock's Director of Government & External Affairs, at 617-879-2431 or [jbolduc@wheelock.edu](mailto:jbolduc@wheelock.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Chard", written in a cursive style.

David J. Chard, PhD  
President