

Cheryl Dowd ([00:00](#)):

Welcome, I'm Cheryl Dowd, Senior Director of Policy Innovations for the State Authorization Network, part of WCET. We're pleased to present the 2021 SANSational award-winning projects. Today, we will introduce the great work of our colleagues from East Carolina University.

Cheryl Dowd ([00:15](#)):

So what is the SAN award? The SANSational Award is an annual award originally conceived in 2015 to recognize the outstanding work of SAN members to develop solutions and strategies to manage state and federal regulations for out-of-state activity compliance that serves to provide student protections. As one can understand, establishing processes and procedures to support compliance isn't a one-size-fits-all task. We need creativity, vision, they're important attributes for compliance staff to understand the problem, conceptualize tools or procedures to address the problem, and then, big, important aspect, buy-in at the institution for cross institutional collaboration to implement processes and procedures to support compliance. Awards are determined through a process, that's including a self nomination of projects to a review committee who evaluates and identifies the projects that should be awarded. Note that we archive these projects and that you can utilize our website to review those past projects. So look on the SAN website on the SANSational landing page for our current projects and previous projects. Thank you to the review committee for their great work and their support throughout the process. Rachael,

Rachael Stachowiak ([01:31](#)):

Thanks so much Cheryl for sharing those opening remarks with us. I'm Rachael Stachowiak, I'm the Director of Interstate Policy and Compliance with the State Authorization Network, and today we are thrilled to award East Carolina University this year in the category of student location. Charlene Lee, our compliance champion at this SAN Member Institution, saw not only the need to track student location information for compliance purposes, but also an opportunity to bring together campus stakeholders to improve data collection systems as a whole. The SANSational awards are given in three categories. The student location category asks institutions to share how they identify where their students are located while taking online courses or engaged in educational activities like internships or practicums. The location of learning activities and the student's location is really the first piece of key information an institution needs to collect in order to comply with applicable state rules and requirements.

Rachael Stachowiak ([02:39](#)):

And why? We have to remember that states oversee respective activities which occur within their borders. So it's within the state's purview to protect and serve the interests of their consumers, and that includes students. So for post-secondary purposes, this often begins with an institution opening its doors to confer degrees, and then state oversight also extends outside of the institution's primary location. So wherever the activities occur, institutions are obligated to review, follow applicable rules of that particular locality. And this is a requirement often referred to as state authorization, sometimes licensing, sometimes certification. Additionally, state-level compliance is tied to federal rules, which govern access to Title IV Higher Education Act programs, so institutions who participate in these programs must provide that legal approval of state authorization to offer federal aid to a student in a particular locality.

Rachael Stachowiak ([03:44](#)):

And under recently updated federal rules, an institution must also issue appropriate disclosures to students seeking and enrolling in programs which lead to a professional license. So an institution can't be appropriately authorized or issue these disclosures without knowing where the educational activity occurs. So again, this is the first critical step to compliance. With all that said, I am so pleased to introduce Charlene Lee to you. She is East Carolina University's SARA Compliance Specialist, and she's going to talk about her project. This is a terrific example of how multiple checkpoints can be installed within existing institutional offices to first identify and second verify locations of educational activities. Charlene, welcome. Congratulations. Thank you so much for your good work and I'm going to let you take it from here.

Charlene Lee ([04:40](#)):

Thank you so much, Cheryl and Rachael. It is really an honor for ECU to receive this award. We worked really hard on getting this implemented, and I'll tell you a little about our award and how we did that. First, I can tell you a little bit about ECU. We are a four-year public institution we're located in Eastern North Carolina. We offer 426 programs to our over 28,700 student population. Our students come to us from everywhere, whether it's online or face to face. We're very proud to say that all 100 counties in North Carolina are represented face to face on our campus and online. We have students in 47 states and 99 countries around the world. One of our most proud things that we are is that we are almost reaching the 191,000th student alumni across the United States and around the world, and we're so excited about that fact.

Charlene Lee ([05:53](#)):

So as you can tell, and as I was saying, where are our students? Well, you can see that our students are everywhere. They're in the 47 states, 99 countries and all 100 counties in North Carolina. Why do we need to know where our students are? Well, of course, as Rachael was talking about, and Cheryl, we have Department of Education regulations. They tell us that we must know where our students are for lots and lots of reasons. Probably the most important one would be for our programs that lead to a professional licensure. We need to make sure that our students know that upon graduation, they can sit for a licensure in the state in which they would like to. We also have to know that information to be able to tell them when they enroll in a program, if their program of choice meets, does not meet, or we haven't made that determination about educational requirements.

Charlene Lee ([06:50](#)):

And we are so fortunate to be a SARA institution, being a SARA institution has many, many rewards. It also has some requirements that go with it, and one of those is our data reporting requirements. We have to tell them on a yearly basis where our students are located in states, other than your home state, which would be North Carolina for us. But we also have to tell them where our students are performing their experiential learning activities. So knowing where our students are located during every single semester is very important for us to be able to fulfill our obligations that we have for SARA. Then we also have our program accreditors, SASCOCS accredits our school. And we also have like the college of nursing or our engineering board. They want to know where our programs are, where our students are located. They want to know that we're reaching our students everywhere that we can possibly reach them.

Charlene Lee ([07:54](#)):

There again, I talked a little bit about, we have to know where our students are because of professional licensure notifications. We also have to let our students know if there's any possible adverse reactions or actions if they move during a semester. And so they might be enrolled in a program that meets requirements in Arkansas, and they might decide to move to Hawaii, and our program may not meet those requirements in Hawaii. So we have to let our students know, and the only way that we can do that is by knowing where they're located.

Charlene Lee ([08:27](#)):

And then during COVID-19, knowing where students were located was very important to us. Even though most of, over the last couple of years, our programs have been mostly online since we had to go that way, when COVID hit, we were able to run this report and determine where the hotspots were. And so then we could match that report to the CDC COVID report and see if any of our students were located in those hotspots and make whatever kind of adjustments that we needed to make. And we do that on a continual basis, even now when things are getting back to normal.

Charlene Lee ([09:11](#)):

So, where does it all begin? Well at ECU, it begins with our office of the registrar. It begins with our grad school, our undergraduate admissions. It begins with financial aid, our med school, our dental school. All of those have admission applications and enrollment applications. And so that's where knowing where students are located, all begins. So our process, our committee got together and decided that we really wanted a simple, but very effective process. And we didn't want it to have to be anything that the student would need to do out of the ordinary. So we, we came up with a very simple question that is on our admissions application and our enrollment services applications. It just says, "Please list the zip code of your location during this semester." This is required of every student every time they register for a course. They can't opt out of this.

Charlene Lee ([10:15](#)):

It's a required field. When they go to click on it and put in their five-digit zip code, a little popup box comes out and that popup box explains to our student why we need that information. You know, we want to be very transparent with our students. We don't want to ask them to give us some kind of information and not let them know why we're requesting this information. It also, in that popup box, tells them what they would need to do if they decide to move during the semester from one location to another. And one of the important things is our zip codes, when they put in their five-digit zip codes, they can't just blow our minds and say, "It's five zeros" or five ones. It actually filters into a zip code verification system, so we know that they're not just kind of just putting numbers in there, that it really is a valid zip code.

Charlene Lee ([11:15](#)):

And then again, as we were talking earlier, why is this so important? It's important because we do need to know where our students are. It's important that the student, when they click on this box, they get a clear understanding of why we need this information. It provides some valuable information to them about if they should choose to relocate during the semester. A banner report, as I had talked about earlier is generated and it's provided to me. It's provided all of the deans of each of our colleges, and then it trickles down to the program directors. This allows our program directors to look at where their students are located, and to make sure if they're in a licensure track program, that their program meets,

does not meet or no determination has been made so they can keep the student informed, so there's no surprises for our students.

Charlene Lee ([12:13](#)):

So we also, as I had said earlier, we wanted this to be a seamless process. We wanted it to be something that besides answering a question, like "list your full name or your date of birth," that it would just be something that the student could do and not really have to fret about it. So we have devised a simplified process of determining where our students are located. This is a question that's asked every single time that a student registers for class, at time of admission. We ask them this one question that must be answered, "Please list the zip code where you're located during this semester." Students cannot opt out of this field. And what we have found, we have been doing this for almost three years, and what we have found is this has made our reporting requirements so much easier.

Charlene Lee ([13:06](#)):

We can run this report, and we run it every semester after census day, and we can run it. We can tell where our students are located. And then when we get ready to do any of our reportings that we have to do, it's so much simpler. Thank you for allowing me to share how ECU locates our students. You'll see my contact information here. Please reach out if you have any questions or just want to chat about this. Thank you so much,

Rachael Stachowiak ([13:39](#)):

Charlene, thank you. That was wonderful. We really appreciate you sharing about this project and sharing your great work. We know it's a big issue that institutions have to face is delving into their distance education opportunities and program approval requirements, so thank you for sharing this project. Congratulations to you. Congratulations to East Carolina University as well. Thank you to everyone for listening today. Please be sure to visit us online at wcetsan.wiche.edu to see more of our SANSational Awards and see our other winning projects this year. Wonderful, thank you everyone. Take care.

Charlene Lee ([14:19](#)):

Thank you.