

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Hello everyone. I'm Jana Walser-Smith with the State Authorization Network. I'm specifically coming to you today about the SANSational Awards. Happy as well to introduce you all to Dr. Malea Fields, associate vice president of Accreditation, Licensure, State Authorization, as well as the accreditation liaison officer. We also have Dr. Miguel Valenzuela, director of Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorizations. And Rebecca Zacarias, licensure and administrative support staff. These individuals are our friends from The Chicago School, specifically the Los Angeles, California location. We're going to be talking to them today about their award-winning project on location. The name of the project is called Embracing Purposeful Engagement for a California Institution.

However, before I go further, I do want to just explain a little bit about the SANSational Awards. For those of you who may be new to the SAN organization, this is our ninth year for the SANSational Awards. They were established back in 2015 and the award were originally established to recognize really outstanding efforts by SAN members, institutions and organizations when they've developed high quality comprehensive solutions to challenging state authorization issues. These works recognized by SAN Awards, present solutions that meet the need of regulators, they meet the needs of the institution, and we are really concerned about making this better for students. And that's what these awards do. That's what these projects do. These projects really serve as models for other institutions to be able to replicate and make sure that these good deeds and these good works again passed on to our students. So without further ado, I do want you all to hear from this dream team from their own words. So Malea, I'll turn it over to you.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

Thank you, Jana. And I just again, want to thank you and express how happy we are to be receiving this award. I will introduce myself real quickly and then I'll let my team introduce themselves and then we'll jump into our slides. I am the associate vice president for Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorizations with The Chicago School. I think I've been here since about 2015. And we just continue to do what we can to make our processes and procedures better. Miguel?

Miguel Valenzuela, The Chicago School:

Yeah. So Miguel Valenzuela. I'm the director for Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorizations. I've been with the institution since May of 2016. Don't let the name fool you, The Chicago School, our home base is actually in California, and that's where we serve our institution and our students from.

Rebecca Zacarias:

Hi everyone. My name is Rebecca Zacarias. I am licensure and administrative staff to our office. I've been with The Chicago School since 2018, so it's been five years now.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Perfect.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

The Office of Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorization has developed and adopted processes to facilitate compliance with all state authorization activities without the ability to join NC-SARA, as our Chicago school main campus is located in California. So in conjunction with state authorization compliance, The Chicago School has worked to create a solid and comprehensive process to determine,

to track and to monitor students declared state of residency and state of licensure and to ensure that our students are well-informed.

In 2019, The Chicago School created this Office of Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorizations. This office is tasked with ensuring our programs are approved and authorized in all states. For some historical context, the Office of the Accreditation, Licensure and State Authorization, which we fondly called OALSA, begin with an initial state by state audit to determine one of three things. First, the states that we are exempt, second states that we were not subject to authorization, and third, what states we needed to apply to in order to be authorized.

Once this initial audit was complete, we then began packaging and submitting all states for authorization. In addition to this, we determined, again by state what their definition of physical presence is so that we could make sure that we're able to offer ground experiences in some states in the form of practicum, clinical internship, externships, or the like. Once we were authorized in all states for online programs, we continue to work to expand our physical presence approval until all licensure programs were approved to offer ground experiences in the states.

We now track all states for two things. First for program authorizations, and second for educational requirements in each state by program. In order to monitor and track, we've implemented nine specific things. So the following things, we have an internal admissions guide, which is updated monthly. It's a quick reference guide for our admissions team to show what programs we are not able to offer and what states or territories. Second, a professional licensure disclosure page, which is updated by annually through our internal audit process. Third, an annual full audit, which we also do a mid-year refresh, but we do a full audit in the fall of every year. Fourth, an annual end of the year gap analysis that looks at enrollments by states and programs and determines if there may be a student enrolled in a program that we are not authorized. Fifth, we have a state authorization process and procedures, documents. We have a licensure SOP, we have student notification of change in state licensure requirements policies. We have student notification of state relocation SOPs, and we have an SOP finally for the required 14 day notification of state licensure changes. So all of those have been done, vetted, through approvals and in progress.

I'm going to hand the next slide over to Miguel.

Miguel Valenzuela, The Chicago School:

Yeah, so we know what it looks like for us. But as a student, what does that look like? So as the student begins the admission process by completing an interest application, students are asked to disclose not only their state of residence, but any state. They are intending to seek licensure upon the completion of their program, and then they're immediately notified via an automated popup that's linked to our OALSA audits. If their program does not meet licensure requirements for the state that they select. If they continue to enroll, they're then counseled by program expert and asked to acknowledge the information provided on licensure for the states.

Additionally, we have built into the student portal that if they make an address change, they will again receive an immediate popup letting them know that the state they're changing does not meet licensure requirements. Again, when this happens, they're routed to a counselor to be further acknowledged. And then a final aspect is the 14-day requirement. If the institution becomes aware of a change in the state requirements for students through our annual audit or our biannual audit process that a state no longer meets those licensure requirements, we notify the effective students and provide them with counsel to obtain formal acknowledgement that they are aware of the changes and how it affects their licensure eligibility.

So, we perform this gap analysis, we complete a gap analysis of enrollments of students and states annually. Through this gap analysis, we identify and track enrollments by programs and states. For instance, we may have students that are enrolled in on ground only programs, however, they may decide to complete a field experience component in a state that's different from their on ground program. And since we know states govern experience components differently, we want to avoid any further issues by getting out in front of any potential compliance issues. And now that the program's approved in every state based upon that... So for example, we have a clinical program where their program is in state. However, they may seek to perform the experience components in Florida when they're on ground locations in California. So we had to go and make sure that we're approved there and available for authorization. So those are the kinds of things that we prevent by doing this gap analysis.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

The first year we did the gap analysis, there were over 100 identified that we need to do, we were able to clear up all but maybe six or so. Last year when we had the gap analysis again, there were about 75 or so and we cleared up all gaps. So we had a zero clean report. And Miguel was going to say this, but our analysis is reported to all of our campus stakeholders once it's completed, it even goes to our board of trustees so that they know here's what was determined, here's what was identified [inaudible 00:09:26] know claim analysis.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Perfect.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

Rebecca?

Rebecca Zacarias:

Yeah. So in 2019, our institution learned about the new federal government requirement that institutions make available to the public and prospective students information about where their programs lead to professional licensure. Since then, our office has been proactive in discovering which processes work best for us, and we found that conducting an annual licensure audit with the best approach to staying up to date with any state licensure requirement changes. This routine audit includes a review of each state's licensing laws and regulations published on the state's licensing board website.

So the Office of Accreditation, Licensure, and State Authorization reviews the laws and regulations to identify each state's educational standards for licensure. And we then determine where the program meets licensure requirements, where the program does not meet licensure requirements and where a determination has not been made.

For more details on this process, we invite you all to watch our presentation titled The Licensure Story: When Obstacles and Challenges Lead to Wins.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Is that story located on...

Rebecca Zacarias:

It's the other presentation that we recorded today.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Oh, okay.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

We are very collaborative. We work closely with our Office of Legal Affairs to ensure that we're meeting all regulatory requirements. We've also worked to automate as much of the processes as we can so that students are immediately informed so that our disclosures are clear, so that they're up-to-date. Our process also ensures that our admissions counselors and our program faculty are updated and aware of any and all states that were not authorized or where a program may not meet requirements. And that's our [inaudible 00:11:24]-

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

That's perfect. I do want to make sure that our members and our friends understand that The Chicago School won two awards this year. And the presentation that Rebecca was referring to earlier is the award that they won for licensure programs. So these two are tying together very closely, and that's what she was referring to. So all of this will be on the SAN website and you'll be able to review that presentation and those recordings as well.

So thank you all again for putting this thing together so tightly. I know how challenging things may be, especially for a California institution. And that's where I want to start with my questioning. For another institution located in California and what that means, of course, is that they don't have the SARA affiliation. I mean, this seems like a daunting task. Do you have students in every state? You do have students in every state, Malea's shaking her head. And so it's just this small mighty team. What would you suggest to a peer institution up in San Diego or down in San Diego or up in San Francisco, where should they start? What should be the first thing they should do?

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

Quite honestly, they should check the SAN website.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

SAN plug.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

We're looking at where state, where your program might already be exempt. If you are institutionally accredited by Western Association Schools and Colleges, Senior College Commission... Whatever, WASC, then you are exempt in some states. Also, you need to do a line by line of all of your programs, and if there's any sort of physical presence, if you have 100% online programs, some states you're not subject to authorization. It's tedious, it's a long process, but you need to really just go state by state. And I would also say, look at your enrollments, where are your students interested? Where are they coming from? Because say, if you have 100 students that are coming from Wisconsin, that might be a state you really want to get authorized in versus two students that are coming from, say, Florida. So really it's a tedious process, but I would start with your website because you do have each state listed out.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

So what Malea's referring to is that the SAN website has a state by state listing of most of the actions that it takes to be authorized in those states. So thank you for allowing that SAN is truly helping out with

these types of issues. I want to ask again, and I've asked this before, so when thinking about the state by state research, and we're talking about tons of programs, tons of students, does this team split up the research or is Rebecca the main researcher?

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

So for this, it's actually Miguel and I, we have taken all of the states and split them pretty much down the road. Rebecca has done a handful. Rebecca is bilingual, so she took on Puerto Rico for us since they don't speak English. And so Rebecca does a handful of them and helps us, I think Iowa and California. But the rest of the states, Miguel and I, really just down the line, split half-and-half. He oversees some and I oversee the others.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Perfect. Perfect. I think, again, being a California institution, it's tough. Talk to me about how you get the word out to your stakeholders within your institution.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

So initially when we started, it was really sort of piecemeal. As we got a letter, we would send it off to our state compliance team and then they would send a larger email out to constituents letting them know. Now that we are authorized in all states where we can be, and all of our programs are, it's really a maintaining. So if there's anything that does change, we add a new program. So for example, if you add a new program, again, you have to go back to every single state and get that program approved in every single state. So when we do things like that and we get the state letter, again, we send it off to a system office who then lets our admissions team know, lets our marketing team know, lets everybody know. We on our side let The Chicago School constituents know by updating that internal admissions guide, which just goes to our full admissions team. Anybody at The Chicago School can access it anytime, it's on our internet. But it really is just updated specifically for our admissions teams.

Jana Walser-Smith, SAN Director:

Perfect. Well, I said it said it before. I'll say it again, you all are a well oiled machine. I mean, everything just runs so smoothly and you guys make this look like something that is effortless, and we know it's way harder than that. So for that, we are in awe and appreciation for your sharing your experiences, and we again congratulate you here on the SAN team for all the great work that you're doing out there in LA. Thank you.

Malea Fields, The Chicago School:

Thank you.

Miguel Valenzuela, The Chicago School:

[inaudible 00:17:16]