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Winners announced for the 2024 SANSational Awards

The State Authorization Network (SAN), a division of WCET, is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2024 State Authorization Network SANSational awards: Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (FL), Post University (CT), Rio Salado College (AZ), Southern New Hampshire University (NH), University of Kentucky (KY), and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (NV).

Boulder, CO – The *State Authorization Network (SAN)* is pleased to announce the winners of the 2024 SANSational Awards. These awards recognize outstanding efforts by SAN member institutions and organizations when developing high-quality, comprehensive solutions to challenging distance education compliance/state authorization issues. Works recognized by the SANSational Awards provide solutions that meet the needs of regulators, the institution, and, most importantly, students. Winning submissions serve as models for peers to readily adapt, replicate, and implement at their institutions.

The 2024 SANSational Award winners are categorized into three areas:

- (1) Compliance Innovations: Institution policy, tools, compliance teams, or other inventive or novel compliance management process;
- (2) Licensure Programs: Notifications and disclosures for professional licensures in each state; and,
- (3) Location: Identifying student location for regulatory compliance and reporting requirements.

This year's winners have been recognized in the following categories:

Category 1: Compliance Innovations

Winner 1: Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (FL)

- **Project Title:** Creating Efficiencies and Ensuring Effectiveness through a Share-Point-Based Change Management Process

Winner 2: Rio Salado College (AZ)

- **Project Title:** College Compliance Calendar Tool: Free Accountability for Us All

Winner 3: University of Kentucky (KY)

- **Project Title:** The Global Compliance Pilot Project – The Evolution of Distance Education Global

Category 2: Licensure Programs

Winner 1: Post University (CT)

- Project Title: Maintaining Databases in Support of Personalized Student Advising

Winner 2: University of Kentucky (KY)

- Project Title: Certification Procedures Planning Project: Collaborating Across Campus for Effective Regulatory Implementation

Category 3: Location**Winner 1: Southern New Hampshire University (NH)**

- Project Title: Identifying Student Location and Reporting Such Information

Winner 2: University of Nevada, Las Vegas (NV)

- Project Title: The Global Compliance Pilot Project: The Evolution of Distance Education Global

“The SANSational Awards exists to serve as a token of recognition for excellence in the distance education compliance field. For recipients, the awards represent a way for hard-working individuals and teams to receive the recognition they deserve. They also provide working professionals the opportunity to better understand and appreciate the work of state authorizations and distance education compliance professions throughout the industry,” said Dr. Jana Walser-Smith, Director of Interstate Compliance and SAN Member Outreach. Walser-Smith continued: “The award winners have demonstrated innovations in response to regulatory compliance requirements. These projects have the propensity to positively impact our communities with achievements that inform and inspire others”.

SAN team members will personally deliver and present the awards directly to each SANSational awardee throughout Fall 2024. Our staff will join in celebrating with each team at their respective locations. SAN will also publish a [video library](#) containing recorded presentations with each winner describing their compliance challenge and winning solution by December 2024 for on-demand viewing.

For more information and videos of our award winners, please visit:

<https://wcetsan.wiche.edu/resources/sansational-awards>

Additional Information on 2024 Award Winners

Winning Category: Compliance Innovations - Institution policy, tools, compliance teams, or other inventive or novel compliance management process.

Winning Institution: Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (FL)

Project Title: Creating Efficiencies and Ensuring Effectiveness through a Share-Point-Based Change Management Process.

About the Institution

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU's) history dates back to 1925 when barnstormer John Paul Riddle and entrepreneur T. Higbee Embry formed the Embry-Riddle Company to teach people to fly. Riddle, who was raised by an educator father, always dreamed of building an "Air University."

Today, ERAU specializes in aviation and aerospace. It has residential campuses in Daytona Beach, Florida and Prescott, Arizona, and offers online and face-to-face instruction through a network of 128 locations (representing 28 states, 8 countries, and 1 U.S. territory). ERAU's mission is to prepare students for careers and leadership roles in business, government agencies, and the military by teaching the science, practice, and business of aviation and aerospace.

ERAU offers over 70 baccalaureate, graduate, and Ph.D. degree programs, including majors in applied science, aviation, business, computers and technology, engineering, space, security, intelligence, and safety. The university's dynamic, hands-on programs can prepare students for careers in many industries, not just aviation. For example, ERAU Worldwide offers flexible course delivery methods for enlisted service members who want to get into Officer Candidate School (OCS) or Officer Training School (OTS) and become commissioned officers.

ERAU's Award-Winning Project Overview

As noted, ERAU operates across a diverse and expansive network, including 87 educational sites situated on military bases. In addition to their physical locations, ERAU offers comprehensive online programs to students both nationally and internationally. The institution's academic portfolio spans roughly 100 programs, from certificates to master's degrees. Given the scale and complexity of its operations, ERAU frequently needs to track and implement various changes across the institution, including the establishment or closure of sites, program updates, site relocations, and name changes.

Managing these changes involved holding hour-long virtual meetings for each change, with up to 60 individuals from various departments within the institution. On average, 25-30 attendees would attend each meeting, resulting in a cost of approximately \$1500 per meeting. During these sessions, attendees would provide input on a checklist of necessary items, often speaking for about 2 minutes each before listening to the remainder of the discussion. This method was not only costly but also time-consuming and inefficient.

In response to these challenges, ERAU transitioned to using a SharePoint-based checklist and tracking system that allows stakeholders to provide their necessary changes/information in written form, which is then transparently shared with all other stakeholders. The benefits of this new approach include increased efficiency, cost savings, improved oversight, and enhanced satisfaction. This SharePoint-based system has made managing ERAU's complex scope of locations and programs more manageable. The process is now more streamlined and includes clear and transparent communication among all parties involved.

ERAU's Staff & Media Contacts: Dr. Will Miller (will.miller@erau.edu) and Katelyn Nelson (Katelyn.nelson@erau.edu).

Winning Institution: Rio Salado College (AZ)

Winning Project Title: College Compliance Calendar Tool: Free Accountability of Us All.

About the Institution

Rio Salado College (RSC) was established in 1978 as the “College without walls” to serve non-traditional students. In 1996, it began offering fully online classes to meet the needs of distance learners. RSC is a public, not-for-profit postsecondary institution regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

RSC offers 600+ online classes and 130+ degree and certificate programs to students within Arizona and across the United States, with a unique model offering 40+ start dates annually. With headquarters in Tempe, Arizona, RSC is recognized nationally as an innovative leader in online learning by making education accessible, flexible, and affordable to meet the needs of today’s students.

RSC’s Award-Winning Project Overview

Within RSC, the Office of Institutional Integrity and Compliance (IIC) coordinates with departments across the college to ensure compliance with all regulations coming from the regulatory triad (federal government, state government, accrediting bodies). Through collaboration with stakeholders, RSC developed a compliance calendar using a SharePoint list for the college to monitor and maintain compliance. However, over time, the calendar became less user-friendly, and user access became a challenging issue.

At issue was the fact that RSC needed to find a way to maintain institutional and staff accountability for their compliance actions while simultaneously creating a user-friendly system that a public 2-year community college with a limited budget and resources could utilize. Accordingly, the idea to create a Google version of the calendar was born, but with a unique twist.

Instead of simply adding information into a basic spreadsheet, each user was provided with a unique dashboard of their compliance items linked to a main Google sheet calendar. Users were then delegated their access based on the items they were assigned. Only the specific/authenticated user could access their calendar dashboard (unless they delegated someone else to manage it for them). Automated emails reminded the staff of their items due with an option to add a reminder to their work Google calendar. These items are then fed back to the master calendar once tasks are completed. The master calendar has a reporting feature that can send custom reports of items past due or pending to the leadership.

The new process saved time and effort and was created with \$0 additional cost. Even more, this project followed a structure of shared governance, which increased transparency and promoted accountability for staff, who now have ownership in completing compliance tasks annually. The team at RSC advises that the Google calendar can be easily updated and readily replicated at other institutions.

RSC Staff Contact: Ramsey Itani - ramsey.itani@riosalado.edu

RSC Media Contact: Michelle Reese - michelle.reese@riosalado.edu

Winning Institution: University of Kentucky (KY)

Winning Project Title: The Global Compliance Pilot Project: The Evolution of Distance Education.

About the Institution

As the state's flagship land-grant institution, the University of Kentucky (UK) exists to advance the Commonwealth. UK does this by preparing the next generation of leaders, placing students at the heart of everything they do. The UK is delighted that it is transforming the lives of Kentuckians through education, research and creative work, service, and health care. The institution also prides itself on being a catalyst for breakthroughs and a force for healing, a place where ingenuity unfolds.

These accomplishments were made possible by UK's people, the visionaries, disruptors, and pioneers who make up 200 academic programs, a \$501 million research and development enterprise, and a world-class medical center, all located on one campus. In 2022, Forbes ranked UK as one of the "Best Employers for New Grads" and named a "Diversity Champion" by INSIGHT into Diversity. These accolades are a testament to the university's commitment to advance Kentucky and create a community of belonging for everyone. While the institutional mission looks different in many ways than it did in 1865, the vision of service to the Commonwealth and the world remains the same. The institution is proud that it is the University for Kentucky.

UK's Award-Winning Project Overview

As the COVID-19 pandemic transitioned many students to online learning, new restrictions on distance education emerged across various countries. Concerns arose related to educational authorization, national security, cybersecurity, tax obligations, and other legal requirements in each foreign market where online programs might be offered. In response, the university launched a pilot project: It established the Distance Learning Global Compliance Research Group (GCRG), consisting of members from Distance Learning Compliance, IT Cybersecurity, University Financial Services, and the Office of Legal Counsel. With no pre-existing policies or best practices to draw from, the university developed innovative frameworks and workflows that have set industry precedents.

The GCRG also implemented a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to streamline research documentation and the approval process, while creating dashboards for both public and internal use. After a year of implementation, the outcomes of the pilot project generated new insights and significantly influenced UK's strategy. By sharing knowledge and best practices, UK aims to advance industry standards in global distance education compliance, foster collaboration, and ensure sustainable practices across the sector.

Staff & Media Contact: Shuiping (Ping) Jiang, Ph.D (shuiping.jiang@uky.edu)

Winning Category: Licensure Programs - Notifications and disclosures for professional licensures in each state.

Winning Institution: Post University (CT)

Winning Project Title: Maintaining Databases in Support of Personalized Student Licensure Advising.

About the Institution

Post University, founded in 1890 and located in Waterbury, Connecticut, on 58 beautiful acres in the heart of New England, is a private university known for its focus on career-oriented

education. Post University offers a range of undergraduate and graduate programs, including degrees in business criminal justice, healthcare, and education. The university also features a variety of athletics, career-building degree programs, and micro-credential opportunities to ensure that a learner's educational experience is the best it can be.

Post University emphasizes flexible learning options, including both online and on-campus programs, making it accessible to a diverse student population. The institution focuses on providing the personal guidance and support students need to succeed in their studies, personal lives, and careers. Post University also has a vibrant student life with various clubs, organizations, and athletic programs.

Post University's Award-Winning Project Overview

The associates at Post University believe that personalized guidance, unwavering motivation, robust support, and a student-centered education are the catalysts that allow students to achieve their individual academic and career goals. Post University programs shape workforce-ready, socially responsible leaders through learning experiences in and out of the classroom designed to promote knowledge exchange, expand thinking, and refine practical and professional skills.

To support efforts to provide personalized advising to any student interested in licensure, including one-on-one contact before, during, and after enrollment, Post University maintains spreadsheets of state requirements with almost 23,000 data points. Simpler versions of these sheets are provided for university associates outside of the Credentialing Team that present over 8,400 data points. Potential and enrolled students interested in licensure programs are tracked on spreadsheets shared with Admissions, Advising, and Academics.

There are 6 sheets containing between 8 and 73 categories of information. To keep costs down and lighten the training load, associates use Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Teams (it should be noted that the University already utilized these programs). Because of these methods for maintaining accurate data, 1,740 potential students were efficiently outreached regarding licensure in 2023. The verification and maintenance of data, as well as all student advising, is managed by a team of only four associates.

Project Contact: Shawn Fields (sfields@post.edu)

Media Contact: Joan Huwiler (jhuwiler@post.edu / 203.591.7147)

Winning Institution: University of Kentucky (KY)

Winning Project Title: Certification Procedures Planning Project: Collaborating Across Campus for Effective Regulatory Implementation.

About the Institution

Please note UK's institutional overview above.

UK's Award-Winning Project Overview

Following the release of the final rule on certification procedures on October 31, 2023, higher education institutions have been working to align their processes to meet the new requirements. At UK, the Distance Learning Compliance Team led a campus-wide compliance project, collaborating with Information Technology Services, Institutional Research, the Office of

Undergraduate Admissions, the Graduate School, Professional Schools, Financial Aid, and managers of all licensure programs.

UK developed the "DE PPA (Department of Education Program Participation Agreement) Licensure" program inventory and implemented a triple-level compliance screening integrated into various application systems to ensure transparency and clarity for applicants. This screening process allows prospective students to verify their enrollment eligibility before submitting an application and paying an application fee, preventing unexpected enrollment restrictions and safeguarding their educational journey. Additionally, the project facilitated an inventory of the university's licensure programs, automated direct disclosures, and increased campus-wide awareness of compliance and data management for state authorization, global compliance, and licensure programs.

Staff & Media Contact: Shuiping (Ping) Jiang, Ph.D (shuiping.jiang@uky.edu)

Winning Category: *Location* - Identifying student location for regulatory compliance and reporting requirements.

Winning Institution: Southern New Hampshire University (NH)

Winning Project Title: Identifying Student Location and Reporting Such Information.

About the Institution

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution located on a 300-acre campus in Manchester, New Hampshire. SNHU serves more than 200,000 learners worldwide, making it one of the fastest-growing universities in the nation. Since its founding in 1932, the University has transformed from a school of accounting and secretarial science to an institution that now offers over 200 accredited programs. SNHU's programs run the gamut of undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs to doctoral-level degrees.

SNHU's programming and support services are strategically designed to fit the needs of today's learners and the ever-evolving workforce. SNHU is committed to ensuring that students keep pace with new technologies and professional requirements, while simultaneously offering learners an exceptional student experience featuring nationally recognized academic programs.

SNHU's Award-Winning Project Overview

SNHU has developed an innovative process that identifies and reports students' physical locations, ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations. The ability to do so is particularly crucial for students enrolled in distance education and licensure programs. The process includes automated biannual pop-up notifications in the student portal, which require students to update their location. Advisors are automatically notified when a student's location changes, enabling them to provide guidance on state-specific licensure requirements. These initiatives help SNHU maintain accurate student records, support compliance, and enhance the student experience.

By integrating advanced technology and proactive administrative strategies, SNHU not only meets regulatory requirements but exceeds them, setting a new standard in higher education

compliance. The process is scalable and adaptable, making it a model for other institutions aiming to improve their location tracking and reporting processes.

Staff & Media Contact: Siobhan Lopez (media@snhu.edu).

Winning Institution: University of Nevada – Las Vegas (NV)

Winning Project Title: Accuracy in Data Collection (ADC) for Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP)

About the Institution

Founded in 1957, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is a doctoral-degree-granting institution with approximately 31,000 students and over 3,600 faculty and staff. UNLV is proud to be a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) with Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) & Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) designations and an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504 institution. With more than 158,000 degrees conferred and over 140,000 alumni worldwide, UNLV is classified as an R1 research university by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education®, emphasizing very high research activity.

UNLV is dedicated to recruiting and retaining top students, faculty, and staff, educating the region's diverse population and workforce, and driving economic growth through research and community partnerships. The university established an academic health center for Southern Nevada, which included the launch of the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV, enrolling its first sixty students in July 2017.

Situated on a 350-acre main campus with two satellite campuses, UNLV honors the traditional homelands of Indigenous groups, including the Nuwu and Southern Paiute People. The university honors and expresses gratitude to those who have stewarded the land for the land itself, and for the opportunity to cultivate a thriving, diverse, inclusive, and scholarly community, working together for a better tomorrow for all.

UNLV's Award-Winning Project Overview

UNLV identified the need for an improved method of tracking out-of-state learning placements in response to mandatory reporting requirements from NC-SARA (requirements began in Spring 2019). The initial step involved outreach to all UNLV colleges and schools, educating them about learning placement activities and identifying courses with learning placement activities. However, due to differences in organizational structures, it was challenging to create a universal tracking method that would fit across all colleges and schools. Each college and school had to rely on its own system to track placements throughout the year, resulting in inconsistencies in reporting. For four years, the Office of Educational Compliance (OEC) requested annual reports from colleges and schools via a spreadsheet, which proved to be an antiquated and rudimentary approach that needed more consistency and accuracy.

Recognizing the need for improvement and the demand for reliable data, UNLV sought a better solution. The most accurate data on student locations was known by course instructors. To capture this data effectively, UNLV developed a system that prompts instructors at the end of each semester (during grade submissions) to indicate the state in which the student completed their learning placement activity.

More specifically, courses with learning placement activities are flagged in the system. UNLV developed an overlay in the grading module for these courses that prompts instructors to indicate the state where the student completed the learning placement activity. Only when this information is provided can instructors enter the student's grade. This data is then stored in the registration system, allowing for efficient report generation when annual reports are due. Multiple levels of administration and offices collaborated on this initiative, which took two years to implement. The process was facilitated with significant contributions from the Office of Information Technology.

UNLV's Accuracy in Data Collection (ADC) for Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) could serve as a model for other institutions aiming to improve compliance tracking systems for out-of-state learning placement activities. UNLV has found that this process ultimately improves data accuracy and efficiency and believes their original prototype might help others reduce their implementation timelines to less than two years.

Staff & Media Contact: Leeann Fields (leeann.fields@unlv.edu).

About WCET

WCET, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, is the leader in the practice, policy, & advocacy of digital learning in higher education. WCET is a member-driven, nonprofit which brings together colleges and universities, higher education organizations and companies to collectively improve the quality and reach of technology-enhanced learning programs. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), WCET's parent organization, serves states, students, and institutions throughout and beyond the American West, and is one of four U.S. regional interstate compacts. The WCET leadership team created the State Authorization Network (SAN) in 2011.

Learn more: <http://wcet.wiche.edu>

About the State Authorization Network (SAN)

SAN is a membership organization serving more than 900 postsecondary institutions and agencies nationwide to collaboratively navigate regulatory compliance for out-of-state activities of postsecondary institutions. By empowering members to successfully resolve educational technology regulatory challenges, members improve postsecondary learner opportunities and protections. SAN serves its members by providing resources, analysis, and training as well as facilitating communication so that members can cooperate to identify common needs, track emerging policies and regulations, evaluate their efficacy, and share lessons learned.

Learn more: <https://wcetSAN.wiche.edu>.

