

**2023 PROFILE OF A STATE
AUTHORIZATION PROFESSIONAL:**
AN ANALYSIS OF A GROWING FIELD IN
HIGHER EDUCATION



STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK
a division of WCET

2023 PROFILE OF A STATE AUTHORIZATION PROFESSIONAL: AN ANALYSIS OF A GROWING FIELD IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The survey and subsequent research were originally developed by a Western Governors University (WGU) team and members of the State Authorization Network (SAN). This contemporary survey/research was conducted by the SAN Institutional Engagement - Special Interest Team (SIT):

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The 2023 Team wishes to thank the 2017 authors for graciously allowing us to reuse and update their original survey, and for sharing the 2017 data, which allowed us to create historical graphs.

Abstract

This study analyzes occupational data, state authorization general tasks and knowledge, and professional licensure and certification requirements from state authorization professionals in the higher education community across the continental United States and some of its territories. The growing demand for students to access distance education programs across state lines and for institutions to comply with state regulations and separately, federal regulations on the “Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008”² have expanded employment expectations and requisites for state authorization professionals nationwide. Thus, the authors created a survey to determine the commonalities and differences of the position. The results showed both shared and variable traits in salary, tasks, position title, department, and professional licensure and certification requirements. As distance education and authorization regulations grow, so will the need for state authorization professionals. The results encourage further research to shape the field as it continues to grow.

Methodology

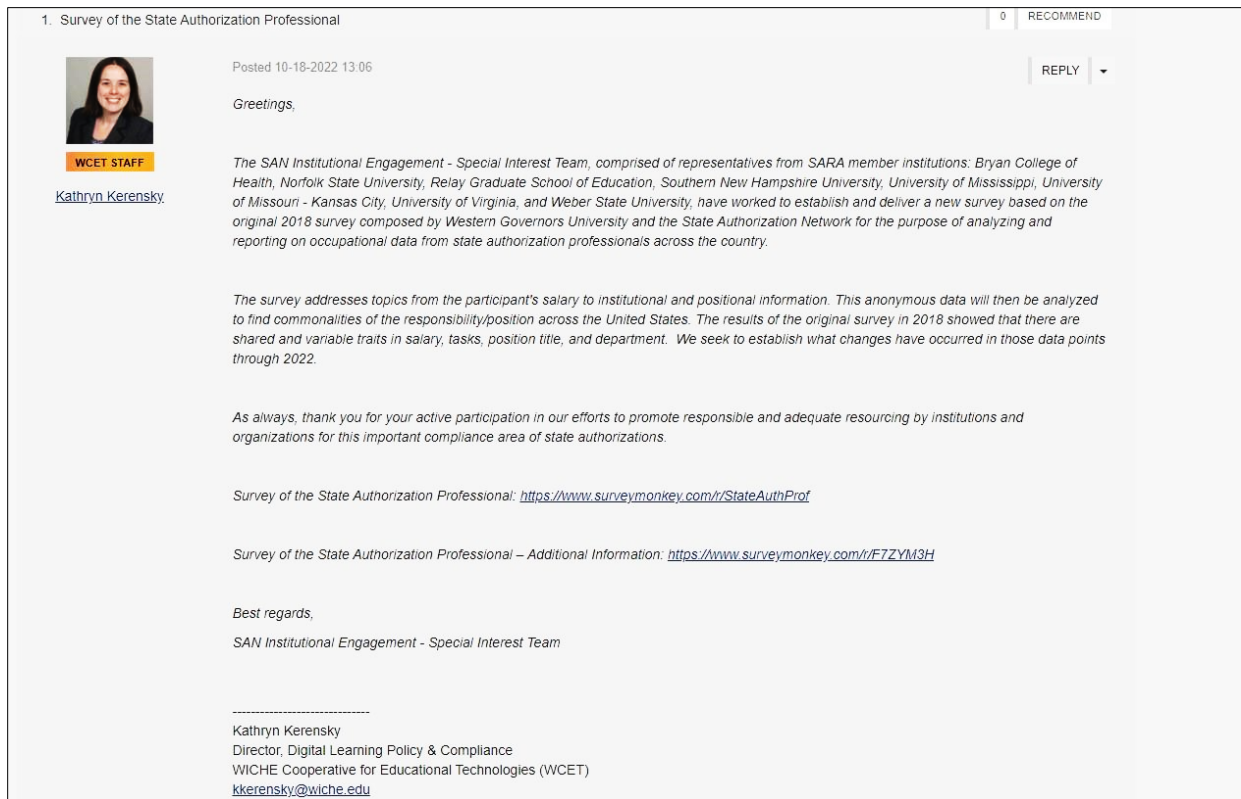
The SAN - SIT, comprised of staff from Bryan College of Health, Norfolk State University, Relay Graduate School of Education, Southern New Hampshire University, University of Mississippi, University of Missouri - Kansas City, University of Virginia, and Weber State University, worked to establish and deliver an updated survey which was grounded in the original 2017 survey, “Profile of a State Authorization Professional” designed by WGU to analyze and report on occupational data from state authorization professionals across the country. The results of the original survey in 2017 revealed that there are shared and variable traits in salary, tasks, position title, and department. The SIT sought to establish what changes have occurred in those data points through 2022.

For the original survey, team members from WGU partnered with SAN to distribute the survey to SAN-member institutions. As it relates to the current survey, SAN organized the Institutional Engagement SIT to develop, administer, and analyze the survey. It should be noted that the SAN staff provided administrative and technical support where needed.

The contemporary survey utilized Survey Monkey™ for presenting the questions and collecting responses. The survey design was reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Under IRB protocol, the SAN - SIT drafted messaging to distribute the survey to SAN member institutions via communication through the wcet/MIX web portal by SAN staff. The team also drafted a communication to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) directors at the four higher education regional state compacts (Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to distribute the survey to the State Portal Entities (SPE) within their respective regions. The original email message sent to SAN members is depicted in Figure 1. Three reminders were also posted on: November 8, November 29, and December 16, 2022.

Figure 1 Screen capture of the original invitation email sent on October 18, 2022.



The survey was conducted from October 18, 2022, to January 31, 2023, and received 276 responses. A separate survey was created to solicit job descriptions from those willing to share. The second survey was conducted for the same period and received 53 responses. It is important to note that the majority of those respondents submitted email addresses to receive more information and that not all respondents submitted job descriptions.

The survey consisted of 39 fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice questions. The questions covered the following areas: institutional information, personal qualifications, position, background, job responsibilities, and compensation and benefits. It is important to note that not all participants answered every question. (Appendix Table J includes a complete copy of the survey.)

Introduction

In 2010 the Department of Education released 34 CFR 600.9 (c) that brought state authorization in distance education to the forefront of institutional compliance concerns. The new federal regulation, tying state compliance to participation in Title IV HEA programs, required an institution offering "postsecondary education through distance education or correspondence courses to students located in a State in which the institution is not physically located or in which the institution is otherwise subject to that State's jurisdiction as determined by that State the institution must meet any of that State's requirements for it to be legally offering postsecondary distance education or correspondence courses in that State".³ This federal regulation sent institutions into a panic as they scrambled to meet the compliance measures of the implementation of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

As knowledge of state authorization has increased and expanded, so have the responsibilities of the state authorization professional. In 2017, a team from WGU, with the support of SAN, worked to design a survey to gather information about the compensation and the attributes of the state authorization professional. Fast forward to 2022, the SAN SIT developed an updated version of the survey to check the pulse of the state authorization professional. The SAN SIT wanted to better understand how the role of the state authorization professional has transformed, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The SIT sought to build upon the original 2017 survey by capturing information on where state authorization professionals stand in terms of salary, responsibilities, position title, and the department in which their work is managed. The team additionally looked to simultaneously capture any changes following the COVID-19 pandemic, including whether the position was remote, in the office, or hybrid.

State Authorization General Tasks & Knowledge

An individual overseeing authorization is responsible for many projects and tasks, ranging from mission-critical to minor maintenance. Typical tasks required of these positions include: researching institutional offerings and placement programs; analyzing current regulations, new regulations, or changes in existing regulations; completing applications (initial, renewals, exemptions, data reports); site visit preparation and execution; working with other university departments to obtain engagement, data, and support for compliance activities; tracking and reporting curriculum changes, new programs, or other changes to approval agencies; and acting as the institutional liaison between state entities and the institution.

Each of these tasks demonstrates the importance and the need for a qualified individual who can manage projects, understand regulations through proactive research, and communicate effectively to internal and external audiences. In addition to the typical tasks, an individual who wants to be successful in this area of focus needs to be knowledgeable in the following key areas: general university governance; curriculum structure, faculty model, and academic services (financial aid) used at the institution; knowledge of where students are located and where they will be at all times in their program (state regulations, SARA policy, federal regulations); and an understanding of who owns the data and policies for each area (student notifications, complaints, disclosures).

Professional Licensure and Certifications

Each state or territory has different professional licensure and certification requirements. Each educational provider has a federal obligation, in addition to potential state and reciprocity requirements, to research and convey to students whether the licensure or certification program(s) offered meet the educational requirements for professional licensure or certification outside the institution's home state. Other states' licensure requirements may include non-educational requirements such as professional examinations, background checks, years of work experience, fingerprinting requirements, etc.

The institution's conveyance of licensure determination to students can occur on a website (which serves as a public disclosure), or via individual notification/disclosure to the student advising them of the licensure program's status in which they are interested or enrolled. The **public disclosure** or website notification satisfies the federal public disclosure requirement of institutions by indicating: (1) the licensure program status as "meets", "does not meet" or that the institution "has not made a determination" for initial licensure in each state and program, (2) the contact information for the licensing agencies in all states for programs in which the status is "does not meet" or if the institution "has not made a determination".⁴

Institutions seeking to enroll students in an academic program that may allow them to pursue professional licensure or a certification in the state or territory in which they are located must also provide those prospective students an **individual disclosure** as directed in federal regulation. This notification must occur before the student makes a financial commitment to the institution. This is especially critical when the licensure program "does not meet" the initial licensure requirements in the state in which the student is located. Enrolled students must receive an individual disclosure when they relocate to another state or state requirements change if the licensure program status changes to be "does not meet" the licensure requirements for the enrolled student's licensure program. Additionally, for institutions participating in reciprocity through the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA), SARA policy requires the disclosure provide the appropriate licensing agency's contact information for the student's new state and advise the student to contact their new state's licensing agency to seek information and additional guidance before initiating a program application if the institution cannot make a determination after all reasonable efforts have been exhausted (Section 5.2 of the SARA Policy Manual).

Results

Institutional Information

Participants were asked a variety of questions about the institutions at which they work. Table 1 shows the demographics of those institutions. Changes observed from the 2017 report were that more participants were affiliated with private institutions, and fewer participants represented public institutions. Both studies demonstrated that the majority of participants were affiliated with institutions located in the SREB Compact and/or had between 100–1,500 employees and/or student enrollments of 1,500–15,000.

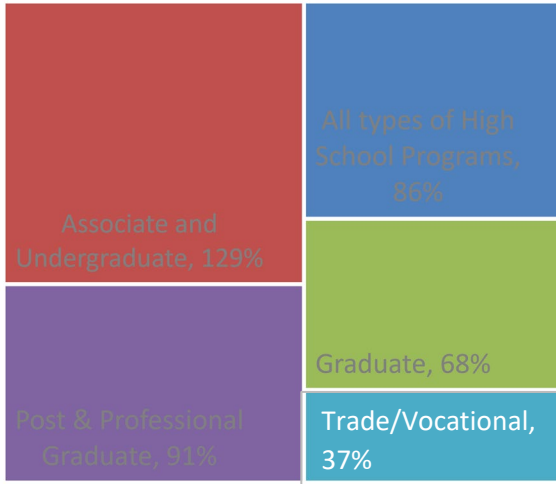
Participants were asked to provide the students' degree levels at their institutions. An institution may attest to having only one degree level or multiple degree levels which is reflected in Tables two and three below. All 276 participants responded. Institutions having educational programs in more than one-degree level may have been duplicated in the count as each institution may offer more than one degree or level.

Overall, the results reflect a broad range of degree levels represented among the 356 undergraduate programs. The largest category of degree programs is undergraduate programs with 205 institutions reporting Bachelor Degrees. There is a

| Table 1: Institutional Demographics | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|-----|
| A comparison of 2017 and 2023 | | | | |
| Category | Survey Options | 2017 Percentages | 2023 Percentages | |
| Institution Type | Public | 73% | 56% | |
| | 2017, n=198 | Private, Non-profit | 22% | 41% |
| | 2023, n=276 | Private, For-profit | 5% | 3% |
| | | Other | <1% | <1% |
| Employees | Less than 100 | 5% | 9% | |
| | 2017, n=191 | 100-500 | 28% | 32% |
| | 2023, n=276 | 500-1,500 | 27% | 25% |
| | | 1,500-3,000 | 10% | 12% |
| | | 3,000-5,000 | 12% | 5% |
| | | 5,000-7,500 | 7% | 6% |
| | | 7,500-10,000 | 3% | 3% |
| | | 10,000+ | 9% | 8% |
| Enrollment | Less than 1,500 | 7% | 24% | |
| | 2017, n=194 | 1,500-5,000 | 24% | 27% |
| | 2023, n=276 | 5,000-10,000 | 18% | 17% |
| | | 10,000-15,000 | 14% | 6% |
| | | 15,000-25,000 | 11% | 8% |
| | | 25,000-35,000 | 12% | 6% |
| | | 35,000-50,000 | 7% | 4% |
| | 50,000+ | 8% | 7% | |
| Institutional Region | WICHE | 19% | 19% | |
| | 2017, n=214 | NEBHE | 4% | 4% |
| | 2023, n=267 | MHEC | 23% | 23% |
| | | SREB | 41% | 54% |
| | | Unknown | 13% | |

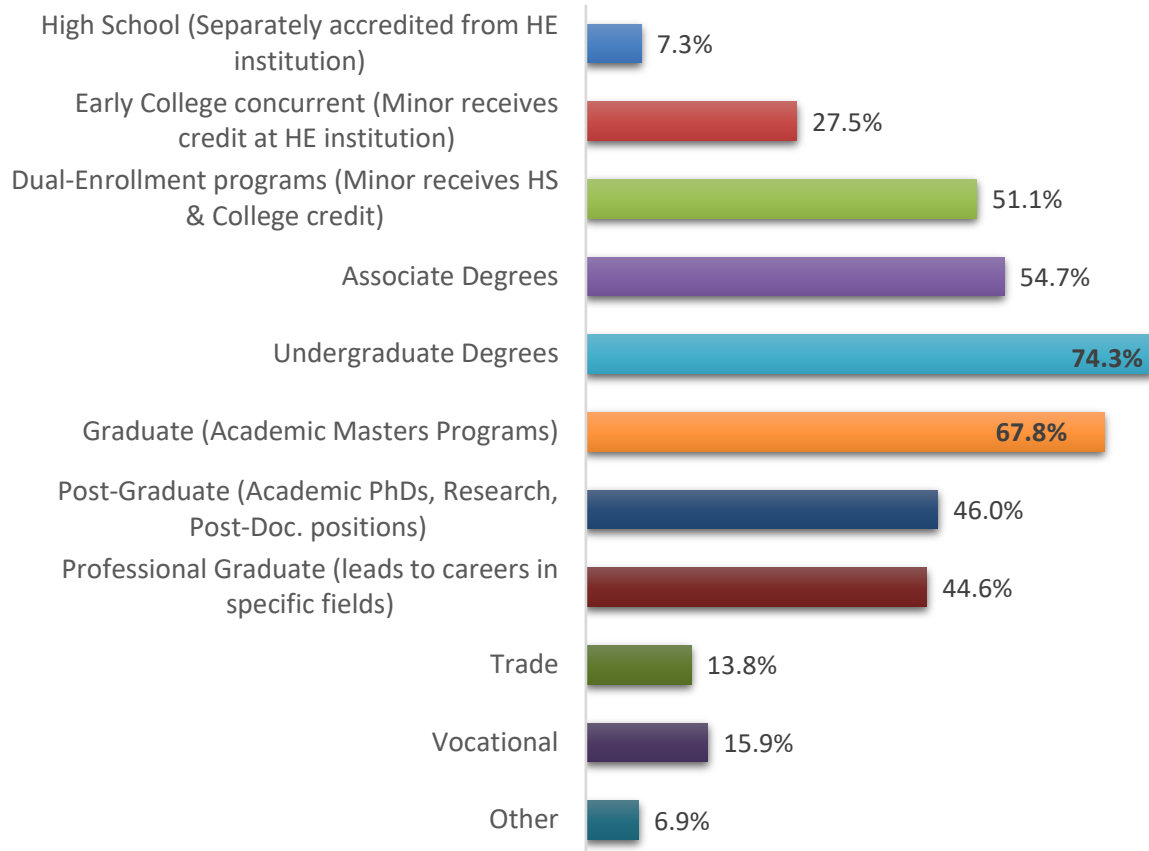
Table 2: Collapsed Levels Attending Institution

Institutions may report more than one level.



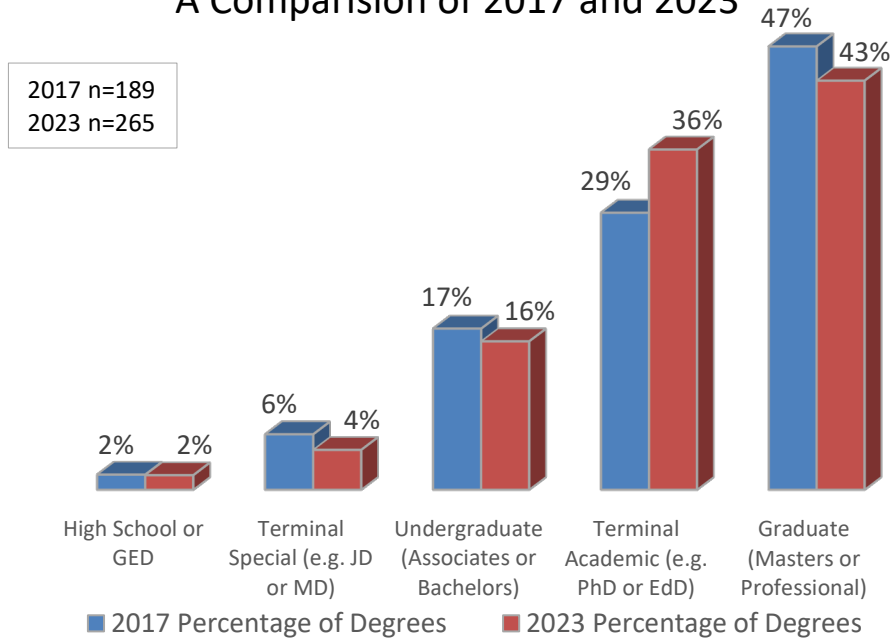
possible duplication of 151 institutions reporting Associate degrees (Community Colleges may deviate and not offer Bachelor degrees). The largest institutional degree level category is closely followed by 250 institutions offering Post Graduate/Professional Graduate level programs. There were 237 institutions offering degree levels at the High School/Concurrent Enrollment/Early College level and should be noted for potential duplication of multiple levels offered by the institutions. One hundred eighty-seven graduate and master’s degree level programs were offered by 187 institutions whereas 101 offered Trade/Vocational/Other academic programs.

Table 3: Levels attending institution



Personal Qualifications

**Table 4: Degrees
A Comparison of 2017 and 2023**

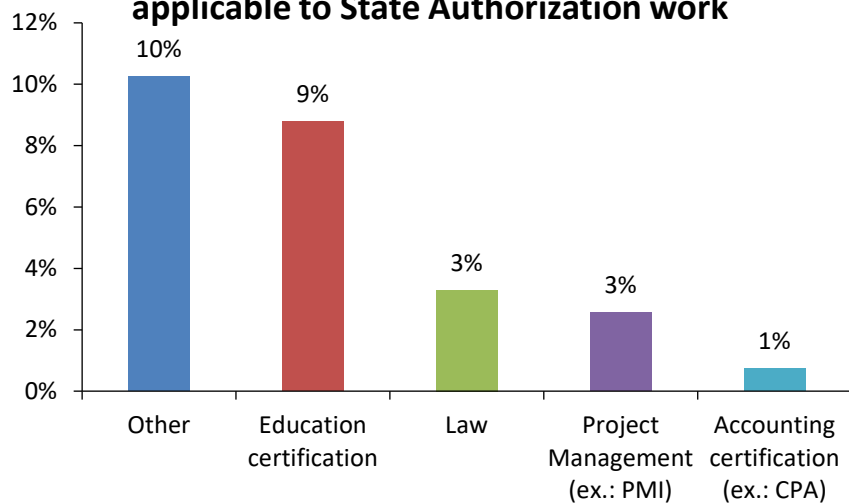


In both surveys, participants were asked about their personal qualifications including highest degree obtained, area of degree concentration, time employed in higher education, and time employed in their current position. The questions in the 2023 survey were similar to those in the 2017 survey, except for changing open-text answers to closed-ended

questions. The majority of respondents were full-time employees (97%, n=262), and the most common highest degree level attained for both surveys was a master's degree. The 2023 survey results indicate an increase in the number of terminal academic degrees. (See Table 4)

The most common area of concentration within the degree attained by respondents in 2023 was Education at 34%, with Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services a distant second at 11%. The 2023 Survey required participants to select degree concentrations from the NCES CIP codes.⁵ The 2017 survey results were recategorized to align the

Table 5: Certifications/Licenses that are applicable to State Authorization work

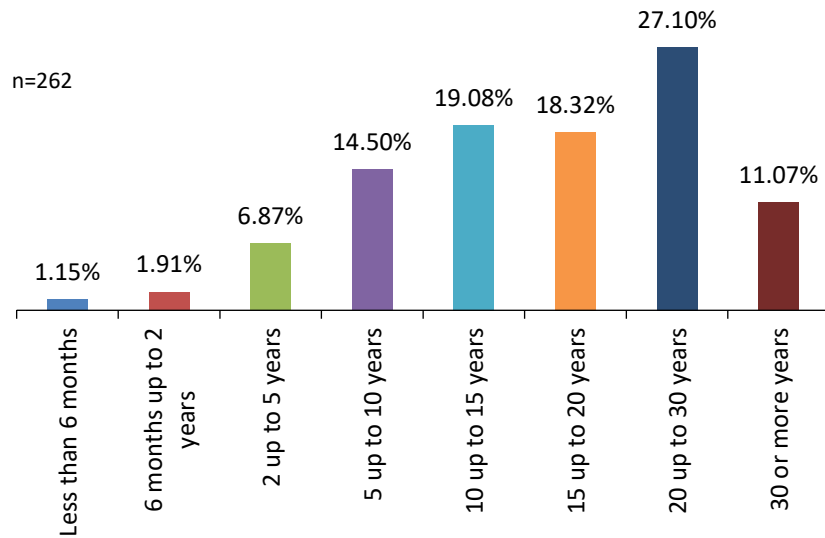


Total Number of 2023 Responses used for this table = 70.
273 selections were received, of which 74% (n=203) selected None or Not Applicable and were not included in this table.

original open responses to the closest NCES CIP code. (See Appendix Table A for a comparison of the most common degree concentrations.)

Two hundred fifty-eight participants answered the question as to whether or not they had a certificate or license applicable to state authorization work. This question allowed for multiple selections, increasing the total number of responses to 273. Seventy-four percent (n=203) selected None or Not Applicable. The highest selection was Other at 10%, with Education certification a close second at 9%. (Table 5)

Table 6: Total years working in higher education in any institution or organization



A significant majority of participants (65%) have worked in higher education for ten to thirty years (Table 6), and have been employed at their current institution or organization for two to fifteen years (58%). (Table 7)

Three out of four participants (75%) have been employed in a position relative to state authorization at any institution and/or organization for a period of six months to ten years. (Table 8)

Participants were asked about their position within their institution. The top two titles selected were Director (29%) and Coordinator (11%) while Other was selected by 17% of respondents, an increase over 2017. (n=262). (See Appendix Table B for a complete list of titles.)

The placement of the position held by the participant within the institution varied drastically. In 2023, the number of respondents of state authorization professionals housed in Academic Affairs increased to 29%, while the number housed within a Distance Education or Online Learning department dropped to 21%. (n=262). (See Appendix Table C for a complete list of participants’ titles and their corresponding departments.)

Position Information

A primary goal of the survey was to ascertain the salary levels of those individuals who work in state authorization. Of the 276 total participants who entered salary information, most earned over \$55,000 annually, as shown in the chart below (Table 9), with the most common bracket earning \$60,000 to \$65,000. Nearly 24.36% of participants earned over \$100,000 annually; however, the majority of these participants had earned a Master’s or Terminal degree. Some of the lower salaries can be attributed to the 18 participants (roughly 7%) who work part-time.

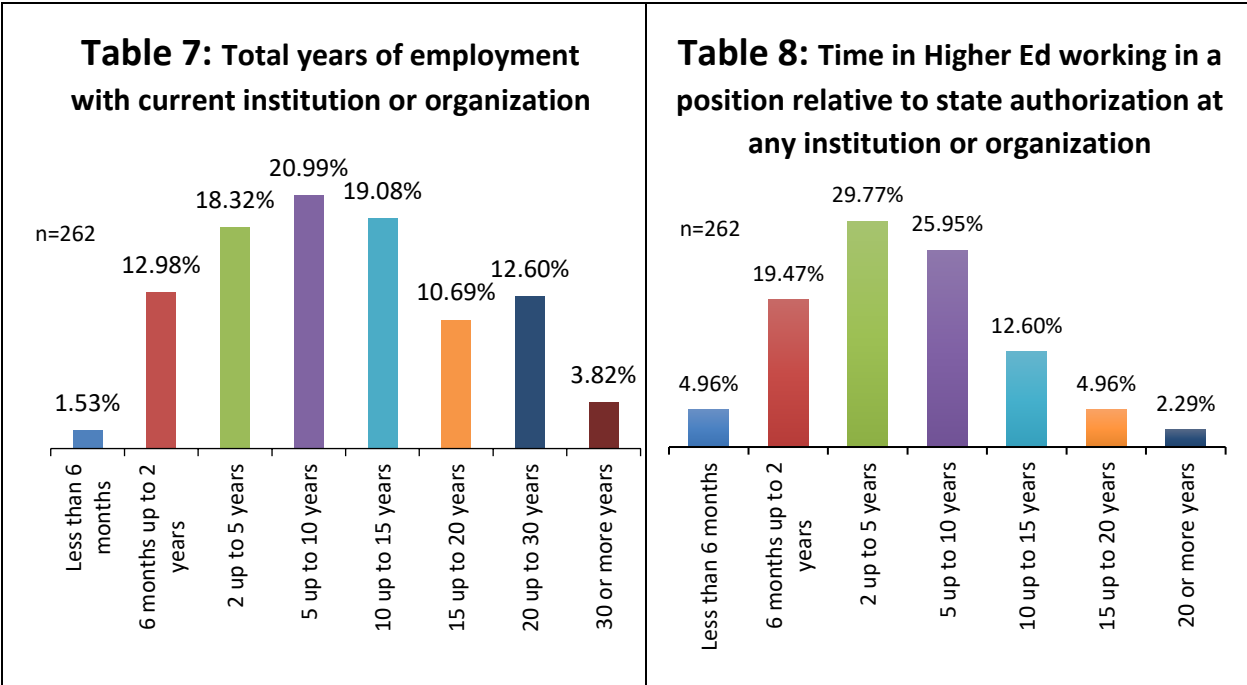
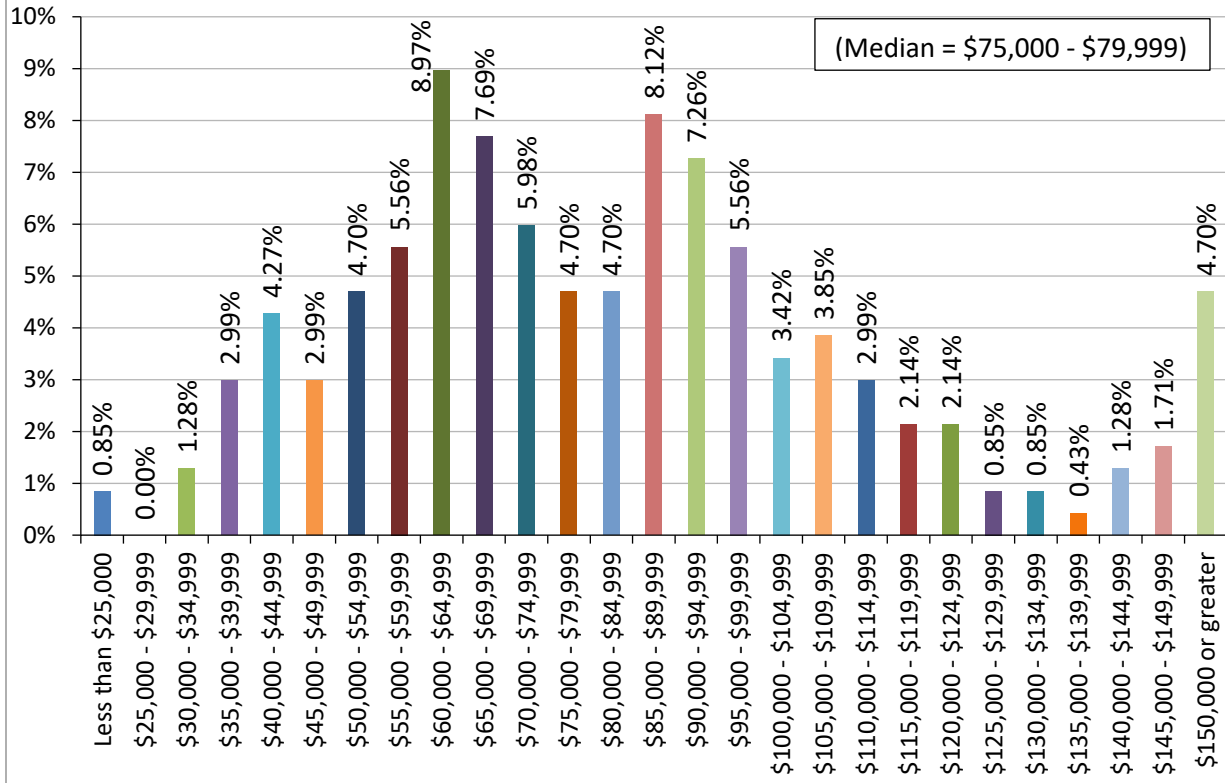


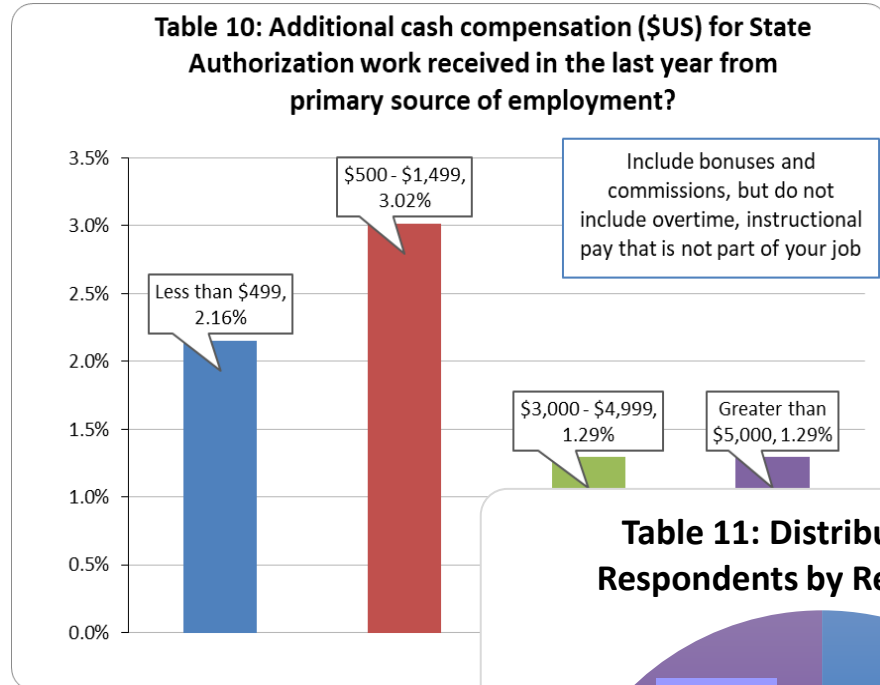
Table 9: Base annual salary (\$US), as of July 1, 2022, from primary source of employment, not including overtime, bonuses, or commission.



Of the 278 respondents to the survey, 44 selected to skip the question or declined to answer. Of the 232 who responded to the question of whether or not additional cash compensation was received in addition to their base salary, 214 (92.24%) indicated they received no additional cash compensation.

They were and were not included in the table visualization. Eighteen respondents (7.69%) reported receiving additional cash compensation to their salary. (Table 10).

To understand the current positions of state authorization professionals around the country, the



analysis of salary data was completed by compact region. The 2023 salary brackets separated by the regional compact in which the institution is located are reflected in Appendix Table D. To view the 2017 expanded salary brackets by region, see Appendix Table E. The 2017 brackets have been modified so that the

range in salary is the same as the 2023 salary brackets.

In determining the regional compacts, the states are distributed according to the four regional interstate higher education compacts⁶: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) represents 22.8% of survey respondents, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) 4.1% of survey respondents, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 54.3% of survey respondents, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) 18.7% of survey respondents.

(Table 11)

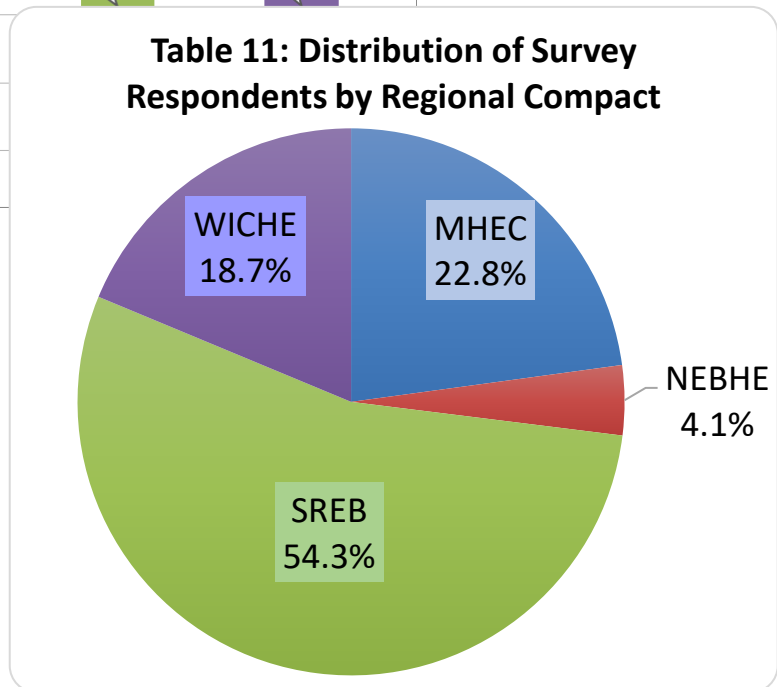


Table 12: Distribution of salaries by low, mid, and high percentages within each regional compact area

| | WICHE | | SREB | | NEBHE | | MHEC | |
|------------|-------|--------|------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|
| Unanswered | 2 | 3.77% | 16 | 11.35% | 0 | 0.00% | 7 | 12.96% |
| Bottom 25% | 8 | 15.09% | 14 | 9.93% | 1 | 10.00% | 5 | 9.26% |
| 25-75% | 34 | 64.15% | 103 | 73.05% | 5 | 50.00% | 39 | 72.22% |
| Top 25% | 9 | 16.98% | 8 | 5.67% | 4 | 40.00% | 3 | 5.56% |
| SUM | 53 | | 141 | | 10 | | 54 | |

A review of the categories by regional compact shows the greatest percentage of Distance Authorization Professionals earning the most salary is in the NEBHE compact. The NEBHE compact had the fewest number of respondents which accounted for the large percentage of outliers. Analysis of the salary information by regional compact also shows that in all but the WICHE region, ten percent or less of Distance Authorization Professionals earn the bottom 25% of the salary range.

The salary responses were also reviewed by degree attainment. (See Appendix Table F). These responses were not broken down by regional compact. In looking at the distribution of degree type as compared to salary, 1.32% of respondents have achieved the highest education level of GED or High School diploma, accounting for a salary range of \$35,000 - \$79,000. Respondents achieving a bachelor's degree account for 14.19% of those with a salary range \$0 - \$114,999. Those achieving a master's degree account for 41.67% with a salary range of less than \$25,000 - more than \$150,000. Terminal degree achievement accounts for 42.11% and a salary range of \$55,000 - more than \$150,000. This demonstrates that the majority of respondents to this survey have achieved a master's or a terminal degree.

Finally, the top three job titles for each Regional Compact and Salary disbursement are displayed in Tables 13-16. The numbers within the bars are the number of respondents. For example in Table 13, two people responded that they made \$150,000 or greater and held an Asst/Assoc VP title.

TABLE 13: NEBHE - Salary by Top 3 Job Titles

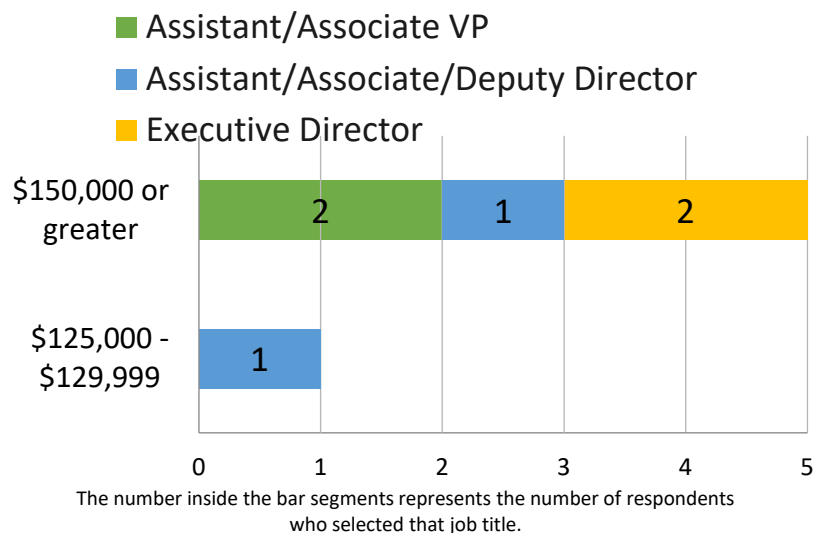


TABLE 14: MHEC- Salary by Top 3 Job Titles

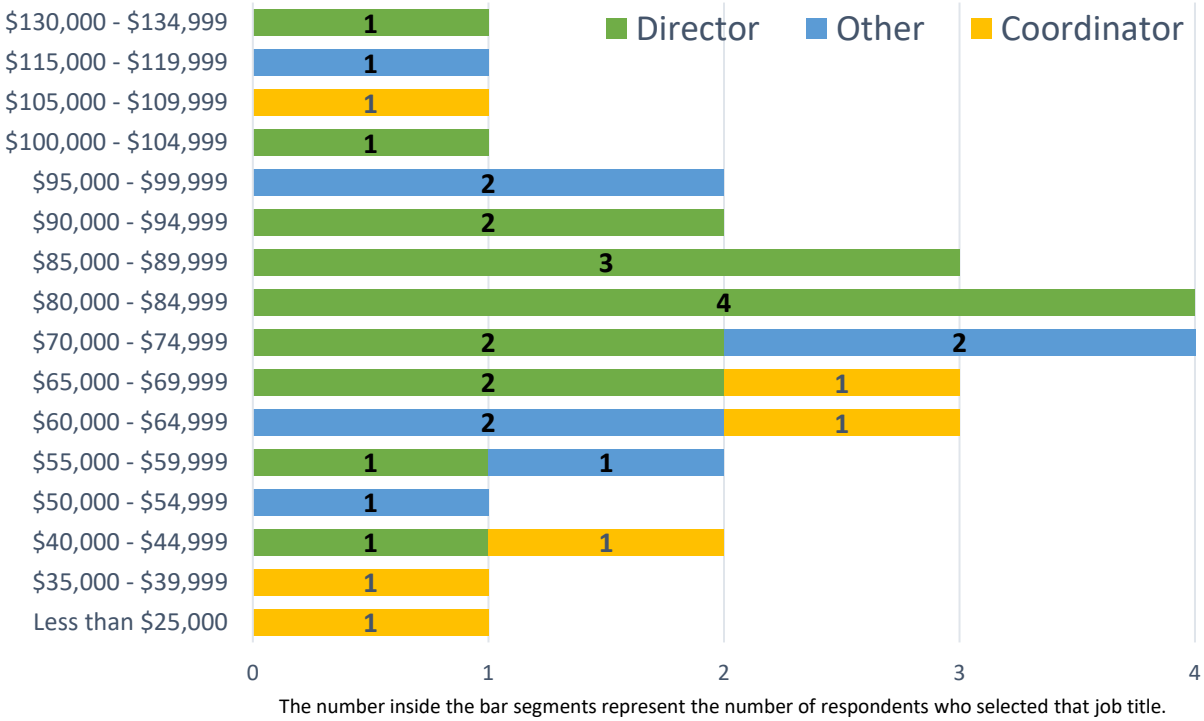


Table 15: WICHE - Salary by Top 3 Job Titles

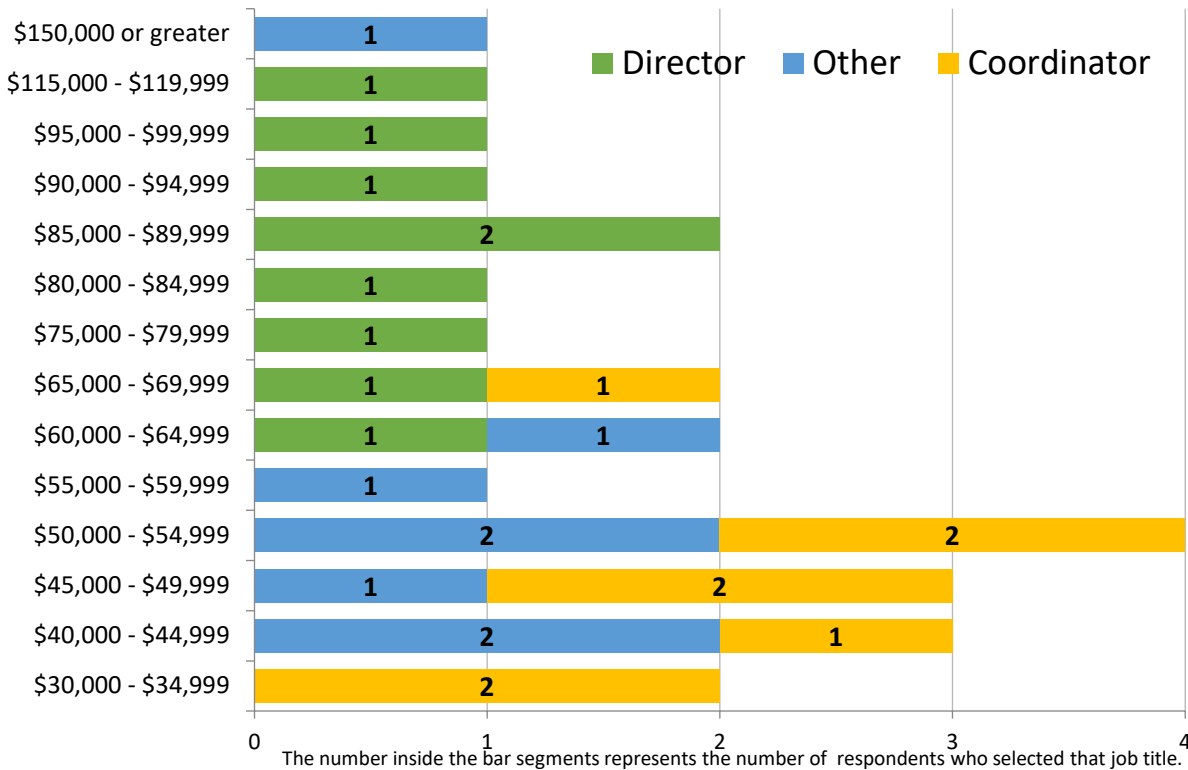
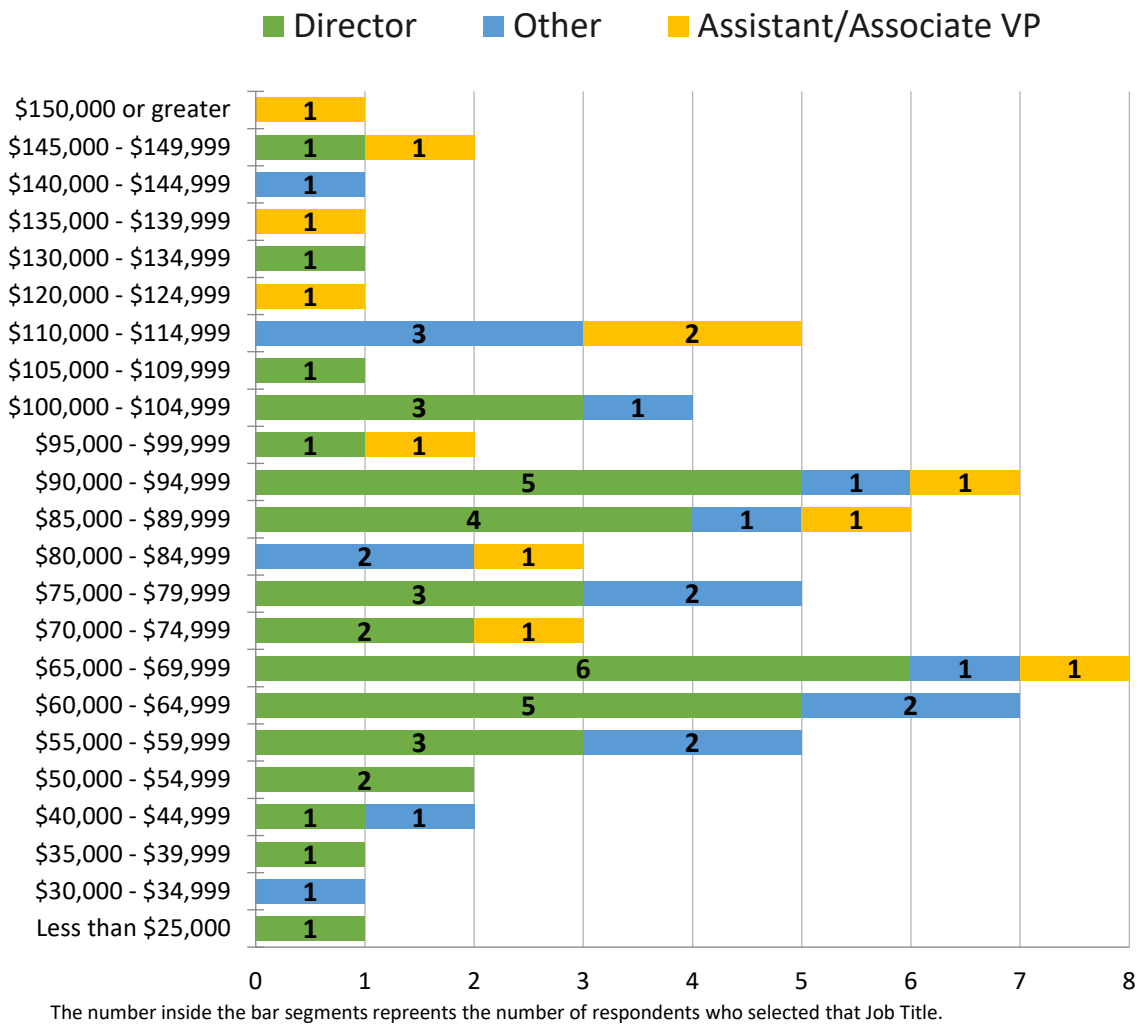


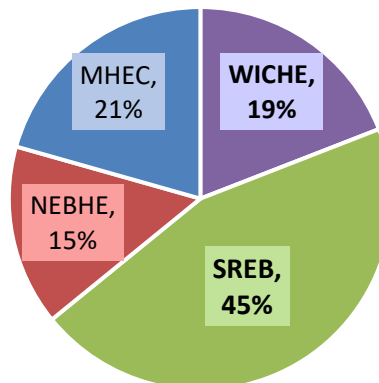
TABLE 16: SREB - Salary by Top 3 Job Titles



Remote, Hybrid, and In-Person Work

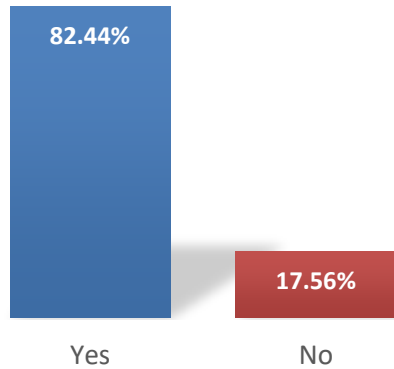
The following graphs represent where the respondent is physically present when they work. The data was analyzed to disaggregate those participants working fully remote or a hybrid of in-person/remote in comparison to over 50% of those working in-person at their institution relative to where the institution is headquartered. This provides a post-pandemic representation of the working environment. The states are distributed

Table 17: Response Rate by Regional Compact:
Where is institution headquartered?



according to the regional interstate higher education compact membership: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) represents 21% of survey respondents, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) 15% of survey respondents, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 45% of survey respondents, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) 19% of survey respondents. (Table 17)

Table 18: Do you work at headquarters' location?

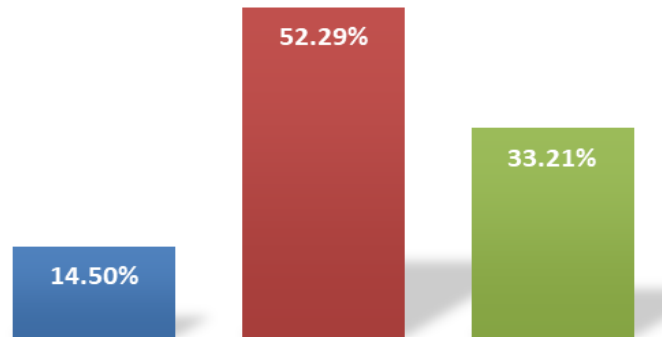


Based on their institution's location, respondents report that 46 are working remotely, whereas 216 work at in-person their respective institutions. Fourteen of the 276 participants skipped this question. The majority of the participants report working at a brick-and-mortar office operated by their institution. (Tables 18 and 19)

Respondents reported where they conduct 50% or more of the institutional work. The earlier response on the location of the institution gave the initial conclusion that most are working in person at their institution.

Table 20 reflects additional information on Compacts. The states are distributed according to the four higher education regional state compacts: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) represents 20% of survey respondents, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) 15% of survey respondents, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 47% of survey respondents, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) 18% of survey respondents. In applying the data representing (1) where the institutions are headquartered and (2) what location 50% or more of the work is conducted, the table reflects that most respondents are physically located at the institution. (Table 21)

Table 19: Is your institutional work remote or virtual?



Yes, it is remote or virtual (i.e. your personal office/workspace not headquartered at the institution)

No, I am working at a brick & mortar office operated by my institution

Hybrid or some other configuration

Table 20: Response Rate by Regional Compact:
Where do you conduct at least 50% of your institutional work?

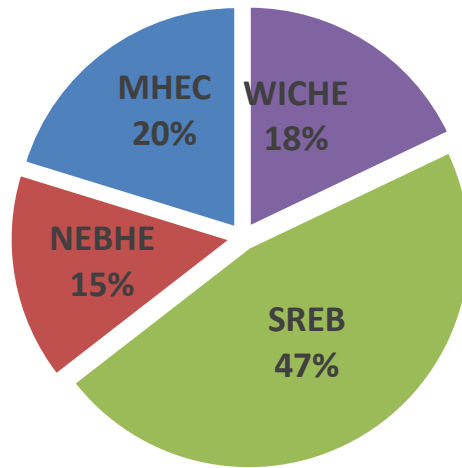
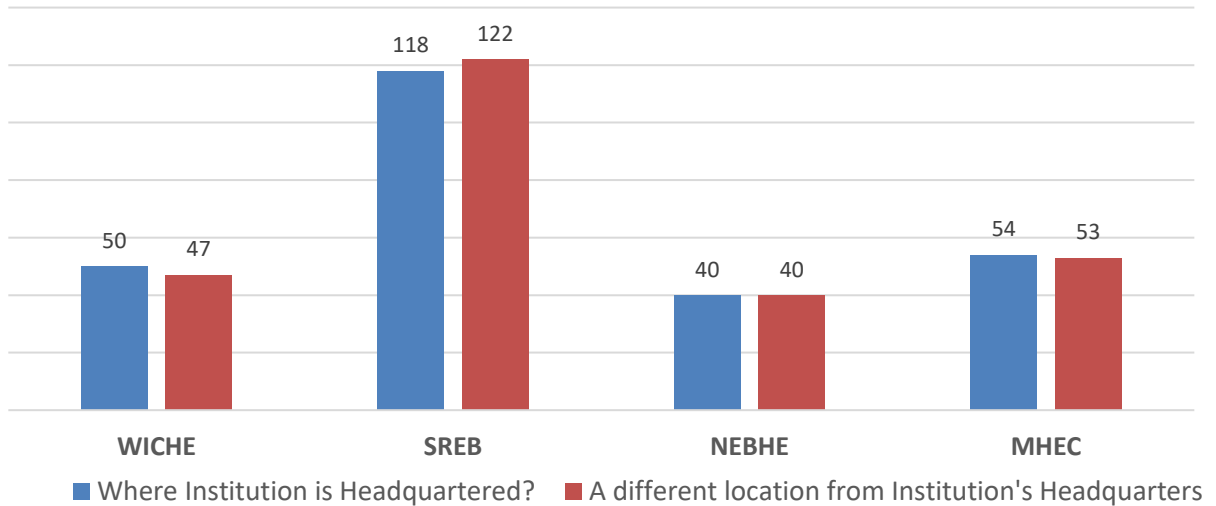


Table 21: Response Rate by Regional Compact:
Where do you conduct at least 50% of institutional work?



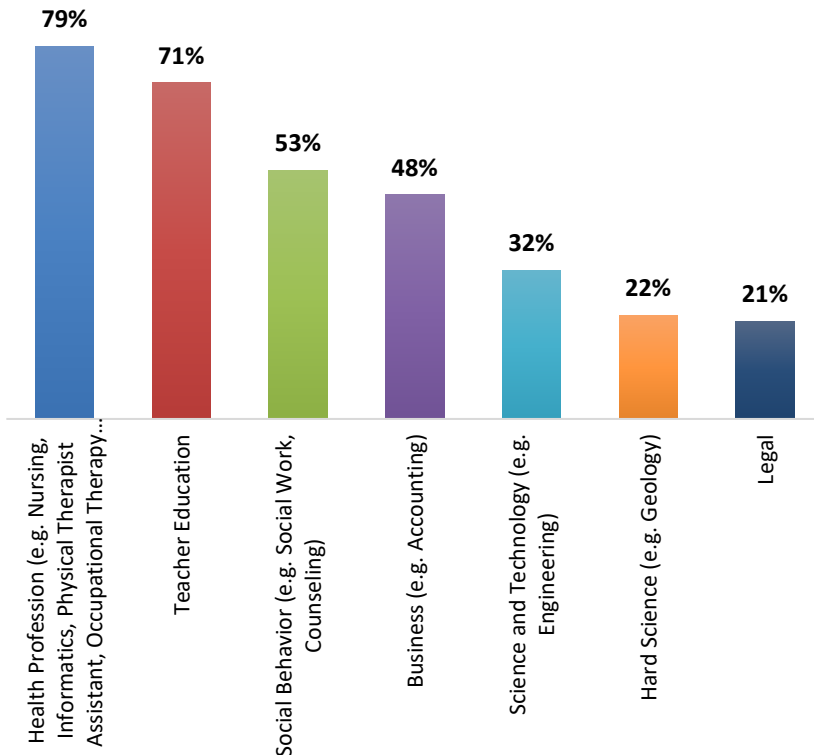
Specifics on Job Responsibilities

Each participant was asked how much time they spent on state authorization/compliance, compliance data reports, international authorization/compliance, and professional licensure or certification. Table 25 reflects that 66% of participants spent between 1%-29% of their time on state authorization work, while 79% spent between 1%-29% of their time on compliance data reports. On the question concerning professional licensure or certification, 62% reported that they spent between 1%-29% of their time in this work, while 13.7% reported that they spent no time. The majority of respondents, 87%, reported

that they spent no time or a small percentage of their time (1%-9%) on International Authorization/Compliance. (Table 22) See Appendix Table G for more detailed information.

| Table 22: 2023 Percentage of time spent on various aspects of State Authorization/ Compliance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|---|------------------|--|------------------|------------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of time spent on State Authorization/ Compliance</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Percentage Range</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1% - 9%</td> <td>30.71%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10% - 19%</td> <td>25.73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20% - 29%</td> <td>9.54%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Percentage Range | Percentage | 1% - 9% | 30.71% | 10% - 19% | 25.73% | 20% - 29% | 9.54% | <p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of time spent on Compliance Data Reports</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Percentage Range</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1% - 9%</td> <td>44.81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10% - 19%</td> <td>26.14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20% - 29%</td> <td>7.88%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Percentage Range | Percentage | 1% - 9% | 44.81% | 10% - 19% | 26.14% | 20% - 29% | 7.88% |
| Percentage Range | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1% - 9% | 30.71% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10% - 19% | 25.73% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20% - 29% | 9.54% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percentage Range | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1% - 9% | 44.81% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10% - 19% | 26.14% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20% - 29% | 7.88% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of time spent on Professional Licensure or Certification</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Percentage Range</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0%</td> <td>13.69%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1% - 9%</td> <td>34.85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10% - 19%</td> <td>15.35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20% - 29%</td> <td>12.03%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Percentage Range | Percentage | 0% | 13.69% | 1% - 9% | 34.85% | 10% - 19% | 15.35% | 20% - 29% | 12.03% | <p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of time spent on International Authorization/Compliance</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Percentage Range</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0%</td> <td>45.64%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1% - 9%</td> <td>41.08%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Percentage Range | Percentage | 0% | 45.64% | 1% - 9% | 41.08% |
| Percentage Range | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0% | 13.69% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1% - 9% | 34.85% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10% - 19% | 15.35% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20% - 29% | 12.03% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percentage Range | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0% | 45.64% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1% - 9% | 41.08% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 23: Responsibility for professional licensure compliance areas

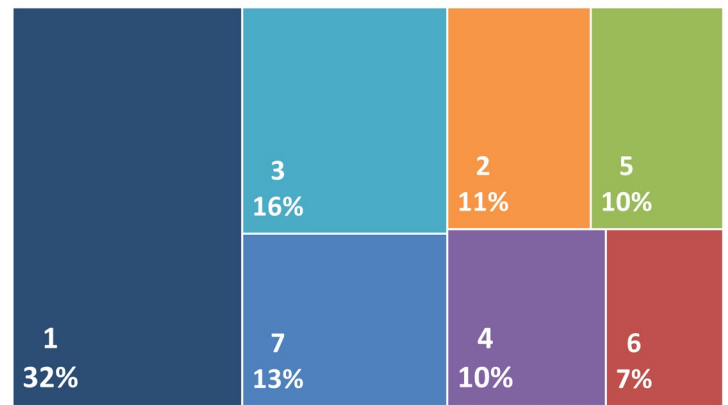


Participants selected the types of professional licensure compliance they manage; the most common categories were Health Profession and Teacher Education. (Table 23). Institutions were allowed to make multiple selections, so the chart below indicates the total number of selections all institutions made. (n=231). Thirty-two percent of institutions indicated they were responsible for only one Professional License/Certification and only 13% indicated they were responsible for all seven areas. (Table 24)

An additional 18.7% of respondents identified that they had responsibility for additional professional licensure compliance beyond the seven listed. A complete list of the additional certifications is in Appendix Table H, but a quick analysis suggests that many programs offered by community colleges or vocational schools were not included in this study.

Of the 2023 survey participants, 92.5% indicated that they had additional responsibilities outside of the state authorization and general compliance listed above (n=222), which is a significant increase over the 80% in the 2017 survey. (n=174) (See Appendix Table I for an anonymized list of additional responsibilities).

Table 24: Distribution of Institutions' selected professional license/certifications



Final Thoughts from Participants

The participants were asked open-ended questions concerning their state authorization work. As qualitative data is by nature subjective to the researcher, we will attempt to summarize here.

The anonymized responses will be made available at a later date to the SAN community.

The task I most enjoy about my job is:

Many of the respondents indicated they enjoyed advising students and collaborating with faculty and departments. They also liked interacting with other state authorization individuals. An equal amount enjoyed the data collection and data reporting of the work. An unexpected number of respondents responded positively to the “detective work” of legal research in the various areas of state authorization. Many of the respondents with additional responsibilities besides state authorization, focused on those outside areas, such as helping faculty implement innovative instructional design and ideas, strategic planning, and supporting the institution's student success efforts. (n=145)

I wish I did not have the responsibility for/oversight of:

One hundred and fifteen (115) participants responded to this question, and the majority indicated that they wished they did not have responsibility for state authorization and professional licensure research and compliance. Two samples of participants' responses are below.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>“Making sure we are in compliance with all states - especially when the rules change and I don't know about it for a while and then have to scramble around to bring us back to compliance.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Professional Licensure Compliance. It's too much to manage between the Fed regs and state regs for the small amount of out-of-state students we have.... Enrollment management folks see the PLC disclosures as a deterrent for prospective students and fight me on wanting to give this type of disclosure to students ...”</i></p> |
|--|--|

Another common response concerned collecting and reporting data to outside groups such as NC-SARA, IPEDS, and US News and World Report. One participant summed up their frustration with the last concern.

“As much as I appreciate rules/regulations - the reporting mandates are excessive. The number of out-of-state students who are 100% online is exceptionally small. The number of statistics that I manage exceeds the number of students that we serve.”

Additionally, respondents indicated a high level of frustration with their institutions and the constant need to convince others that State and Federal compliance is important for the institution. One participant's comment sums up what many others expressed in the survey.

“Fighting with faculty and administration to implement required state and federal regulatory changes on campus. They overcomplicate the process, drag their feet, and many of them don't understand out-of-state requirements ...” (even after repeated conversations).

Limitations

After analyzing the results, several limitations of the survey were noted and considered if the survey were to be given again. These limitations include the skewed number of respondents by regional compact and the lack of answer options that include a null option.

First, although the total number of respondents (n=267) exceeded the previous survey responses (n = 220) the number of respondents by region shows a wide range of 11 respondents in the NEBHE region to 145 in the SREB region. The survey was distributed by SAN in conjunction with the regional compacts. This process was hoped to address the distribution limitations in the 2017 survey. Even with this change in distribution, the wide range of responses from each region skews the entire analysis as the majority of the data comes from a single region. Attempting to achieve a more equal distribution of responses by compact region would provide a better representation of the Distance Authorization Professional role across the country. Second, about midway through the data collection cycle, the investigators realized several of the questions did not include a null answer option. If the survey were to be given again, the investigators would recommend adding a null answer option to all questions.

Third, 10% of respondents selected “Other,” indicating they held certifications or licenses that applied to their state authorization work. Future studies should allow for an open-ended response to discover what other licenses were applicable to their work. Fourth, we did not allow for enough variety in the questions about participants' positions within their institution. Multiple respondents selected “Other” (17%) for this question. Any future surveys should allow for more variety or an opportunity to write in the position name. Last, 18.7% of respondents indicated that they had responsibility for additional professional licensure compliance beyond the seven listed. The majority of programs offered by community colleges or vocational schools were not included in this study. Any future studies should expand the areas available for selection.

Conclusion

This survey was designed to gather information about the compensation and attributes of state authorization professionals across the country. While the initial emphasis centered on salary, the focus broadened to evaluating the scope of the position. A few commonalities from the results of the survey can be drawn as to what attributes a typical professional brings to the field. These include working for a small- to medium-sized public institution and possessing a graduate degree with several years of experience working within higher education. The individual is often the sole person assigned to state authorization but also completes other tasks for the institution, often outside of compliance.

The researchers were not expecting as much variation among salary, title, tasks, or department. The wide discrepancy makes it difficult to determine the average salary or qualifications of a state authorization professional. As distance education and authorization regulations grow, so will the need for state authorization professionals. With fewer than 10 years since the planned implementation of 34 CFR 600.9 (c), state authorization is still in its elementary phase. Research like this should be continued to help shape the future of state authorization as it grows and matures.

References

¹ Heath, T., Carney, L., & Jonsson, T. (2018). Profile of a State Authorization Professional: An Analysis of a Growing Field in Higher Education. <https://wcetsan.wiche.edu/sites/default/files/files/2018-10/Profile%20of%20a%20State%20Authorization%20Professional%20-%20Final.pdf>

(Retrieved 3/22/2022)

² Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/pdf/LAW-110publ315.pdf> (Retrieved 10/20/2023)

³ Institutional Eligibility Under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended (2011). 84 FR 58834. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-11-01/pdf/2019-23129.pdf> (Retrieved 10/20/2023)

⁴ Student Assistance General Provisions, The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, The Secretary's Recognition Procedures for State Agencies, 2019, 84 Fed. Reg. 58834

⁵ National Center for Education Statistics; Classification of Instructional Programs. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?v=55> (Retrieved 4/27/2023)

⁶ Notes on Compacts

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is an interstate compact. Our member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

The District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands became members of SARA through the SREB compact.

Western Regional Higher Education Compact (WREB) is an interstate compact among 15 western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) is an interstate compact and serves the six New England states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

New Jersey and New York became members of SARA through the NEBHE compact.

Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) is a regional interstate compact. The member states of the Compact are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.