MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

June 5, 2015

S.5607 (LaValle)

An act to amend the education law, in relation to authorizing the state education department to enter into interstate reciprocity agreements and/or regional compacts for post-secondary distance education programs

New York University (NYU) strongly supports S.5607 (Flanagan), which would amend the education law to authorize the New York State Education Department to enter into an interstate reciprocity agreement and/or regional compact for postsecondary distance education courses and programs. This bill allows New York State to join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which is a nationwide initiative that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education.

The increase in recent years of digital technology has allowed colleges and universities to provide programs of study to students through distance education. This has created new opportunities for students who do not reside where the institution is located, while opening up a new marketplace for institutions. However, with increasing competition in the online environment and declining numbers of New York students projected to graduate high school over the next several years, maintaining a competitive edge in the national distance education marketplace is vital to New York State’s colleges and universities.

New York University supports this bill because SARA allows institutions to offer distance education to out-of-state students without needing to navigate the regulatory framework for each state. States participating in SARA become the “home state” for institutions residing there, and assume responsibility for approving those institutions. The approved institutions can then offer distance education in all other states that are parties to the agreement without being subject to further requirements. Participating in SARA would eliminate these obstacles, and end the current competitive disadvantage that all New York colleges and universities face by the State’s nonparticipation in SARA.

The proposed authorization to allow the New York State Education Department to participate in SARA would ensure that New York’s remains competitive in the rapidly growing market of distance education. For these reasons, NYU strongly supports and urges the Legislature to pass this bill.

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