

**Question:** You asked for information about how states include higher education institutions in charter schools policies and practices, including as authorizers.

**Response:** I am sending a few notes from my discussion with our contact at the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), a few key resources on this topic recommended by NACSA, and information about states with policies allowing higher education institutions to serve as authorizers.

### Higher Education Institutions and Charter Schools

As mentioned previously, I spoke with someone at NACSA about your question and I am including a few key points from our discussion. She is a great resource on this topic and I recommend contacting her for more information.

- States seeking to involve higher education institutions (HEIs) in charter schools should consider what they want HEIs to contribute to charter schools in their state. Their role will differ depending on how they are involved: formally as authorizers, or informally through partnerships.
- Authorizers serve as an oversight body at “arm’s length” from the charter schools they oversee and they are outside of the process of actually running charter schools.
- HEIs can have more “hands on” involvement in the actual process of running a charter school when they are not authorizers.
- In states allowing HEI authorizers, HEIs often do not serve as primary authorizers.

### Resources

There are a few different resources on this topic, mostly from NACSA, that will be useful for you.

- [“Creating Higher Education Institutions Authorizers,” NACSA](#) (note that this document was last updated about 1 year ago and some of the state-specific information may be outdated)
- [“The Feasibility of Alternative Methods for Authorizing Charter Schools in Pennsylvania,”](#) Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, 2015 (There are several sections in this report that discuss HEI authorizers – see pages S-1 through S-4)
- [State Policy Analysis, NACSA, 2015](#)
- [State Policy Analysis, NACSA, 2014](#) (see pages 11-12 for information about alternative authorizers)
- I also recommend reviewing some of the documents from NACSA’s [“State Policy Resources”](#) page

### State Policies: Higher Education Authorizers

*This information is from NACSA’s [State Policy Analysis, 2015](#)*

Seventeen states, or about one-third, have policies allowing higher education institutions (HEIs) to authorize charter schools. There is wide variation in how these policies actually play out, and in these states the amount of involvement by HEIs varies quite widely. In a handful of states that allow HEI authorizers – Hawaii and Oregon, for example – there are no active HEI authorizers, while HEIs in a few states – like Florida and Wisconsin – may authorize only in limited circumstances. On the other side of the spectrum, in a small number of states – such as Missouri and Michigan – HEIs are the primary authorizers.

States allowing higher education institutions to be authorizers:

- Arizona
- Florida – limited jurisdiction; HEIs may authorize specific career technical and lab schools
- Hawaii – allowed but inactive
- Idaho – allowed but inactive
- Indiana – HEIs authorizers include universities offering 4-year degrees and 30 different for-profit universities; in practice just one state university authorizes a large number of charters
- Louisiana – allowed but inactive
- Michigan – 11 HEIs authorize 82% of all charters in the state, most with a significant portfolio of 10+ schools
- Minnesota
- Missouri – HEIs may authorize schools only in jurisdictions that do not meet specific accreditation and performance thresholds; all but one charter school in the state are authorized by one of 11 active HEI authorizers; two HEI authorizers oversee 55% of all charter schools
- Nevada – allowed but inactive
- New York – following state policy revisions in 2010 and 2015, only two authorizers – the state board of education and the State University of New York – may approve new start-up charter schools
- Ohio – HEI authorizers in Ohio tend to maintain relatively larger portfolios of charter schools than other authorizers
- Oklahoma – limited jurisdiction; HEIs may authorize schools only in districts in 5,000+ students or districts with schools on the state's school improvement list
- Oregon – allowed but inactive
- South Carolina – South Carolina State University started accepting applications in 2015
- Utah – Charter schools authorized by HEIs must also receive dual approval from the state board of education
- Wisconsin – limited jurisdiction; three HEIs may authorize in specific, limited regions of the state, and starting in 2015 four HEIs may authorize schools statewide