



REGENTS UPDATE

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Regents New STUDENT Project to Offer Greater Convenience for Students

Students at South Dakota public universities will be granted an added convenience with the launching of the Regent's new Information Technology plan. The Regents were given a briefing of the plan's progress at the regular March Board meeting.

The plan, named the STUDENT Project, will allow students to perform common student services transactions and to obtain commonly needed information online. Development of the STUDENT Project has begun and implementation is planned for fall 2003.

"It is all about better serving the students," said Board of Regents Chief Information Technology Officer Lee Alley. "With the implementation of the STUDENT Project students will be able to access services and information from any place at any time."

Online services to be made available to students through the STUDENT Project will include: applying for admission, auditing and planning progress towards a degree, registering for classes, applying for financial aid, purchasing textbooks, accessing library services,

requesting transcripts, dropping and adding courses, paying fees, retrieving new grades, updating personal demographic information and the viewing and printing of his or her unofficial transcript.

In addition to the provision of common services, students will also be able to access the following information online: general education requirements, degree completion requirements, course descriptions and equivalencies, course syllabi, class schedules, course-specific and commercial database reference materials and his or her financial accounts.

"Once the STUDENT Project is completed we will encourage students to perform all common student services transactions online. They will also be encouraged to obtain common needed information online," said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. "We will, however, provide students an alternative in-person process to handle exceptional needs when the online format does not suffice the student."

"Uniform across the system, the Regents IT Plan will provide guidance for the

overall scope and direction for consolidated information systems that offer a more integrated statewide response to student-centered needs," said Alley.

In developing the STUDENT Project, the Board requested that the student-centered service-model requirements for implementing these information systems be listed within the context of the existing Colleague student information system. These requirements have been developed with advice from campus representatives on the STUDENT Project team, the System-wide Technology Affairs Council, and the Presidents.

Regents Elect New Officers

At its regular March business meeting the Board of Regents elected new officers. Harvey C. Jewett will remain as President. Rudy Nef was elected Vice President and Randy Morris was elected to the position of Secretary.

Regents Study Retention at South Dakota Public Universities

The Board of Regents has completed a review of a retention report that examines student retention on a system basis. The report primarily addresses retention rates observed with cohorts of degree seeking students enrolled during Fall 1998. It also provides information on degree seeking students enrolled during Fall 1999.

"The retention report showed how retention rates varied depending on the components used in calculations," said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. "Retention rates were higher when comparing Fall to Spring rates to Spring to Fall rates, when comparing Fall to Fall/Spring rates to traditional Fall to Fall rates, and when comparing anywhere in the system rates to same university rates. Also, retention rates were higher when all degree seeking students were included compared to just first-time, full-time baccalaureate degree seeking students."

The system retention rate for first-time full-time baccalaureate degree seeking students enrolled in South Dakota public universities from Fall 1998 to Fall 1999 was 72.5%. Nationally, the average system retention rates reported by a SHEEO (State Higher Education Executive Officers) survey for first-time, full-time degree seeking students from first Fall to second Fall term was 75.8%. The SHEEO survey included responses from twenty-seven states.

When considering only degree seeking students enrolled at South Dakota public universities between Fall 1998 and Fall 2000, the average Fall to Spring retention rate was 89.4% and the average Spring to Fall rate was 81.6%.

Results of the retention report also showed that

non-resident students who discontinued their enrollment at one of the Regental universities were less likely to have transferred to another Regental university than resident students. Graduate students were also less likely to transfer than undergraduate students.

In terms of undergraduate student classifications, freshmen typically had the lowest Fall to Fall retention rates and seniors the second lowest. From Fall 1998 to Fall 1999 system retention rates for freshmen was 68.02% and for non-graduating seniors, 76.05%

When examining graduate student retention rates, Fall to Fall/Spring retention rates may be more appropriate than Fall to Fall rates due to the episodic nature of their enrollment. For example, while the Fall to Fall system retention rate for master's students was 59.67%, the Fall to Fall/Spring rate was 74.96%. Graduate students pursuing professional degrees (law, medicine, pharmacy) had the highest retention rates, 94.62%, retained at the university over a two-year time period.

"In future studies of retention the Regents will use careful consideration when selecting a retention rate as a performance indicator. How a student cohort is defined and the timeframe selected greatly impacts the calculated retention rate. Unless a national comparability component is necessary, time frames in addition to Fall to Fall, such as Fall to Fall/Spring, should be considered. The Regents will also consider including other student cohorts in addition to Right To Know cohorts to provide a more complete view of student retention," said Perry. ■

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Tuition and Fees at Regental Universities Fiscal Year 2003

The Board of Regents set the university system tuition and fee rates for the next academic year. The Regents' objectives in setting the tuition and fees were: to meet the costs of the state salary policy for employees not paid by state general fund resources; to meet the costs of an additional one percent salary increase to achieve a salary pool of 4% in order to retain South Dakota's average salary position relative to surrounding states; to complete the process of standardization of the University Support fee in order to provide the same resources for academic support for students at each of the state universities; to cover the salary costs of employees paid from fee revenues; and to provide technology funding to implement the Regents' technology plan.

"The Regents were able to minimize tuition and fee increases at South Dakota universities. Our neighboring states, Iowa and Minnesota are expected to increase tuition and fees by 18.5% and 13.6% respectively," said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett, Aberdeen.

For the 2002-03 academic year tuition rates at all universities for resident undergraduates will be \$65.00 per credit hour. Based on 32 credit hours, the average estimated system costs for tuition, required fees, room and board is \$7,432.29, an increase of \$406.53 over the cost of the same items in the current academic year. That is a weighted system average increase of 5.8 percent. The Board approved exceptions above the 3.4% inflation guideline for three campuses to adjust the percentage increase for required fees. Students at Northern State University and South Dakota School of Mines and Technology requested an increase in General Activity Fees. The additional funds at Northern will be used to pay increased costs for health services and maintain services to students. At School of Mines the additional funds will be used to remodel the student center and remodel the wellness center. An exception was also granted to Northern and the University of South Dakota for an increase for Board Fees to meet contractual agreements with their food service provider.

"When setting tuition and fees the Regents' bottom line is to maintain an affordable quality education option for students while meeting the financial needs of the universities. There are several factors that are measured to arrive at a set number," said Jewett. "Some of the factors that influence tuition and fee amounts are inflation, salary policy and benefits, and instructional costs."

"A change has been made in the way that the Regents figure the inflationary adjustment in tuition and fees. The Regents formerly used the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) to calculate for inflation, but with its future availability unknown the Board made the decision to use the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It is the same approach used by the Bureau of Finance and Management (BFM) which is the average change in the four quarters from FY2000 to FY2001," said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. "After inflation the next factor the Regents consider in setting tuition and fees is salary and benefits. The Regents have to adjust for the annual salary policy for state employees that is proposed by the Governor and passed by the Legislature. About 45 percent of all Regents' employees are supported by funds that are not appropriated from general funds of state government. Every time the state gives employees a raise or an increase in health insurance, we have to raise tuition and fees to cover the salaries and benefits for our employees who are not paid by state funds," said Perry.

The Regents also made adjustments to the universities' fees. The University Support Fee (USF) supports instructional and administrative services. In prior years this fee varied at each university. The fee is now standardized for all of the universities due the Regents' standardization plan. The standardization is the reason why increases at some institutions are greater than at others as the universities close the gap and achieve the same rate. Unlike the USF, the General Activity Fee, which supports student union buildings and student organizations, reflects campus support for their different functions. Even though the students and institutional presidents recommend an increase, it cannot be charged until they have justified the increase to the satisfaction of the Regents.

Fee increases for FY03 include money to continue the plan to raise salaries for faculty and non-faculty exempt employees. "The Regents decided to continue the salary competitiveness fee. It was originally adopted by the Regents four years ago as a three-year plan," said Jewett. "The University Presidents communicated with the Regents that the salary competitiveness fee allowed them to recruit new faculty and to reward those on campus who contribute the most to the education of their students. The Regents extended the fee for those reasons in fiscal year 2002 and did so in fiscal year 2003 for the same reasons." ■

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Regents Proficiency Exam

The South Dakota Board of Regents, at its regular March business meeting, heard a report on the results of the fall 2001 administration of the proficiency examinations taken by sophomores enrolled in the six regental universities. A system-wide total of 2,163 rising juniors were required to sit for the proficiency exam for the first time in fall 2001.

"Once again the regental university system mean exceeded the mean for the national comparison group in all four areas tested within the examination. South Dakota students are continuing to perform strongest in the areas of science and mathematics," said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett. "Our universities are doing an excellent job of increasing students' knowledge in these subject areas."

According to the report, in the area of science reasoning 99.9% of students taking the proficiency exam for the first time in fall 2001 obtained a score at or above the minimum level of performance. In

mathematics 98.7% scored at or above the minimum level of performance, 95.4% did so in reading and 92.7% in the area of writing skills.

"A self check, the proficiency exam determines the value added to the education of students through the general education curriculum. We administer the proficiency exam to ensure that our universities are increasing the knowledge of their students. Even though the students are taking the exam the universities are also being tested. And the results continue to show that the value added to education at South Dakota universities exceeds national averages," said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry.

The fall proficiency examination report only includes information on those students who sat for the examination during the fall 2001 semester. The annual report that is presented to the Regents in June will provide information on the entire 2001-02 cohort of students; therefore more trend information will be available this summer. ■