

Synopsis: Because South Dakota's public universities function as a coordinated system, with approval coming from a single Board of Regents, all six campuses are uniquely positioned to respond quickly to local, regional, and state needs. Time and again, the public universities demonstrate they can gear up rapidly in order to meet demands for a new academic program, specialization, or degree. This Issue Brief summarizes several examples of the system's high level of responsiveness. Information is provided about expanded degree offerings in Sioux Falls, new Ph.D. programs designed to stimulate the South Dakota economy, preparation of paraprofessionals to meet federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, and the demand for an education doctorate in Rapid City.

New Degree Programs at University Center/Sioux Falls

The ink wasn't even dry on a 2006 law to create the University Center in Sioux Falls before the South Dakota Board of Regents moved decisively to approve new degree programs and course offerings to benefit more students, without costly duplication of new programs.

By mid-year, undergraduate majors in criminal justice, marketing, and finance from The University of South Dakota; financial services from Northern State University; and management information systems from Dakota State University were approved for Sioux Falls delivery. Two Ph.D. programs—nursing from South Dakota State University and computational science and statistics, jointly offered by USD and SDSU—were also ready to go.

By fall 2006, five additional majors were open to Sioux Falls students: construction management, geographic information systems, graphic design, and psychology, all from SDSU; and economics from USD. In December 2006, just nine short months after University Center was first authorized, the regents had approved Sioux Falls for the industrial technology major from Black Hills State University and the international business degree from NSU.

New Doctoral Degrees Focused on Research and Development

Soon after Gov. Rounds took office in 2003, he and the Board of Regents joined together in the 2010 Initiative to build the kind of university-level research capacity that drives economic development and commercialization. Within the first year, four highly-specialized university research centers were created with the goal to become nationally competitive in science and technology-related research. Since university research is closely linked to cutting-edge Ph.D. programs, six new Ph.D. programs were approved in 2005: nanoscience and nanoengineering, computational science and statistics, M.D./Ph.D. physician scientist, nursing, geospatial science and engineering, and atmospheric and environmental sciences. These programs were developed

in the fall of 2004, approved by the spring of 2005, and already operational for students by fall 2005.

Within another year, four more doctoral programs came on board—information systems, electrical engineering, biomedical engineering, and wildlife and fisheries sciences. This year, the legislature is being asked to create three more—Ph.D. degrees in chemical and biological engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, and materials chemistry. If approved as expected, these programs will be ready to start this fall.

In less than three years since the 2010 Initiative launched, the regents have created six new doctoral programs and requested three more, all holding great promise for spin-off economic development. Four more Ph.D. programs were started for which no new state resources were requested, and a fifth is already in the planning stages. Doctoral programs often take years, if not decades, to establish in other states. In South Dakota, public universities bypass the red tape and deliver results.

Non-Credit Training Needs

Any of the public universities are able to quickly respond to requests for short-term education or training needs, without seeking approval from the Board of Regents. For example, Dakota State University has provided specialized computer training designed to meet the needs of a particular business or industry. At SDSU, short-term education courses and training are readily available to the agriculture industry.

Associate Degrees in Paraprofessional Education

In 2002, hundreds of teacher aides in South Dakota faced new educational requirements mandated by the federal government in the No Child Left Behind Act. Paraprofessionals who assisted teachers in classrooms supported by federal Title I dollars were required to have completed at least two years of postsecondary study, obtained at least an associate degree, or have demonstrated knowledge of and ability to assist with instruction in reading, writing, and math.

South Dakota's public universities immediately geared up to provide assistance. By August 2002, the Board of Regents had already approved new associate degrees at Black Hills State University and Northern State University in paraprofessional education to start immediately yet that fall. The degree provides a solid grounding in general education and more specific courses needed by classroom paraprofessionals.

Rapid City Cohort for Ed.D. in Educational Administration

By 2004, a growing need was becoming evident for doctoral-trained education professionals in western South Dakota. School districts and higher education institutions were looking for more people with terminal degrees to serve as K-12 school administrators or adult and higher education faculty members and administrators. No existing doctoral programs in education were available for hundreds of miles around.

In the summer of 2004, the Board of Regents asked The University of South Dakota to put together plans to bring the Doctor of Education degree in educational administration to Rapid City in a non-traditional, executive delivery format. By the fall, plans were approved and a course of study developed. USD School of Education officials met with interested students from the area, and more than 60 students signed up to take the first courses offered in January 2005. Two years later, most of those students are still enrolled in the program, finishing up their final coursework, and writing their dissertations.

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