



News Release

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USD and SDSMT Approve New Admission Standards

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents gave its approval Thursday for the University of South Dakota and South Dakota School of Mines and Technology to require higher admission standards.

“The regents agree with USD and the School of Mines that the higher admission standards fit with their respective missions and will result in better service for their students,” said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett.

Board policy allows each university to adopt specific admissions regulations that assure acceptable student preparation and enrollment levels. For the past decade the same minimum admission standards applied to all six public universities. The policy required incoming students to meet certain high school course requirements. In addition, students were required to have an ACT composite score of 18 or above, or a high school graduating class rank in the top 60 percent, or a high school grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.6 on a 4.0 scale.

Admission criteria at USD’s Vermillion campus will change to a minimum ACT score of 21 and a high school graduating class rank in the upper 50 percent. The increase will be implemented in fall 2007 and will be phased in over three years. The ACT score requirement will increase by one point per year.

“USD’s current average student ACT score is 22.5. Forty-seven percent of fall 2004 entering freshmen scored 24 or above on the exam, a significant increase over several years ago. We believe a continued focus on higher admission and academic standards will result in increased retention and graduation rates, both of which are goals of the South Dakota Board of Regents,” said USD President James W. Abbott.

“University of South Dakota students, faculty, administration and staff support this exciting change. We want to make sure the fit between the U and its students is the best it can be. Aligning admission requirements with the high academic standards already in place at USD makes great sense,” said Abbott.

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At the School of Mines, applicants will be classified into three categories based on ACT composite score, the ACT mathematics sub-score, and high school GPA:

1. Automatic admission – students who have high ACT and/or GPA. Their scores reflect that they are prepared to begin programs of study in engineering and science.
2. Individual review – students whose record is unclear and who may be prepared through participation in pre-enrollment programs.
3. Do not admit – those students whose record indicates they will need significant additional preparation before they are prepared to begin programs of study in engineering and science.

“It is only appropriate that the admission requirements should be aligned with the expectations that students will encounter when they enter the degree programs,” said SDSMT President Charles Ruch.

The admission changes at the School of Mines will be implemented in fall 2006, with a two-year transition period.

At the end of the transition period automatic admission will be granted to students who have at least a 25 ACT composite score and math score, or whose GPA is at least 3.5 and who have taken four years of math, or who are South Dakota Regents’ Scholars.

“Our goal is to attract students who are prepared for the work that is required, teach them, and graduate them. By implementing these changes in admission and, at the same time, improving and adding to the academic support programs we offer, we can better serve the students we admit and increase our competitiveness with our peer institutions,” said Ruch.