

Synopsis: Health care careers are a popular option for students in the South Dakota public university system. Nursing is the most popular health care-related academic program, with strong interest as well in programs leading to degrees in pharmacy and medicine. The health care and social assistance industry is projected to be the fastest growing of all industries in South Dakota through 2012, due to an aging population and increased specialization in medical fields.

Nearly 4,400 students were enrolled in health-related academic programs at South Dakota's public universities in spring 2006. Studies leading to health care careers are a popular option for students in the public higher education system, according to data compiled by the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Nursing is the most popular health care-related program with 2,318 students enrolled in nursing, pre-nursing, accelerated, or upward mobility programs. There were 522 students enrolled in pharmacy or pre-pharmacy programs, and another 388 in medicine or pre-medicine.

The Board of Regents and its public universities strive to deliver programs that meet the increasing demand for health care professionals in South Dakota. The South Dakota Department of Labor forecasts that the health care and social assistance industry will be the

Board of Regents Health Care Program Enrollments — Spring 2006

Medicine, Pre-Medicine	388	Audiology, Speech-Language Pathology, Communication Disorders	117
Pharmacy, Pre-Pharmacy	522	Nursing, Accelerated Nursing, RN Upward Mobility, Pre-Nursing	2,318
Pre-Dentistry	45	Medical Technology, Clinical & Lab Sciences, Pre-Medical Technology	92
Pre-Optometry	17	Athletic Training	109
Pre-Chiropractic	36	Dental Hygiene, Pre-Dental Hygiene	184
Physical Therapy, Pre-Physical Therapy	177	Respiratory Care, Pre-Respiratory Care	72
Physician Assistant Studies, Pre-Physician Assistant Studies	63	Health Services Administration, Health Information Administration, Health Information Technology	120
Occupational Therapy, Pre-Occupational Therapy	37	Clinical Psychology	73
		TOTAL	4,370

fastest-growing industry in South Dakota through 2012. The demand is being fueled by growth in the health care delivery sector as a result of an aging population and more specialization. By 2025, it is estimated that South Dakota will have the 9th highest proportion of elderly residents in the country.

From 2002 to 2006, the six public universities in South Dakota conferred 3,919 degrees in various health care programs. Degrees awarded in these programs increased by about 35 percent over the four-year period—from 696 in 2002 to 941 in 2006. The biggest increases during this time were in graduates of nursing programs at the associate and bachelor degree level.

To prepare for a career in the health care professions, it is recommended that students get a good head start by taking the right courses while still in high school. A strong preparation in mathematics and science is important. All health careers involve some laboratory science, and some programs demand intensive work in the hard sciences, such as chemistry, biology, or physics. In order to keep up with the latest developments in the field, students in these programs also will be expected to continue studying and learning throughout their career.

For links to health care degree programs at South Dakota public universities, visit the Web site at: <http://www.sdbor.edu/health/programs.htm>.

Degrees Conferred in Selected Health Care Programs 2002-2006

Major	# Degrees Conferred	Change Between 2002 and 2006
Nursing (B.S.)	980	69
Nursing (A.S.)	895	146
Pharmacy	266	14
Medicine	251	0
Other health care- related programs	1,527	16
TOTAL	3,919	245

Source: South Dakota Board of Regents

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