

**Synopsis:** Public universities are focused on efforts to retain students, and the retention rate of new undergraduate degree students has improved. To measure retention, the Board of Regents looks at the percentage of new fall associate- and baccalaureate-degree students who are enrolled in the next fall semester. University retention rates for new fall 2006 students exceeded those for new fall 2005 students. Better prepared students are more likely to be retained. The South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship contributes to retention by encouraging students to take college-prep courses in high school and remain in state for college. University retention programs assist and support students who want to remain enrolled and complete a degree. These programs support Gov. Mike Rounds' 2010 Education Initiative to expand the number of citizens with postsecondary education. These college graduates will be needed to fill positions in business, education, and health care.

## What is a Retention Rate?

A retention rate is the percentage of a group of students enrolled at a later date. The group can be defined in several ways. The later date could be the end of the semester, the next semester, one year later, or two years later, for example. The Board of Regents publishes (in its *Fact Book* and *Accountability Report*) a one-year retention rate that begins with all new students seeking an associate or baccalaureate degree in a fall semester. People enrolled previously, transfer students, and non-degree students are not included in the group. Students are included in the regents' data regardless of the number of credit hours they take. The one-year retention rate for students who began in fall 2006 is:

$$\text{Retention \%} = 100 \times \frac{\text{Number enrolled in fall 2007}}{\text{New associate and bachelor students in fall 2006}}$$

For example, if there were 500 new students seeking associate and bachelor degrees in fall 2006 and 325 were still enrolled in fall 2007, the one-year retention rate is 65 percent.

Because students may transfer from one system university to another, two rates are computed: a retention rate for enrollment at the same university and another rate that includes students enrolled at any system university (for example: SDSU in fall 2006 and BHSU in fall 2007). Students who transfer to private, tribal, and out-of-state public institutions are not counted as retained in this calculation, although they are continuing their education.

To examine improvement in this retention rate, it is necessary to look at two groups of students:

- New in fall 2005: Retention rate = percent enrolled in fall 2006
- New in fall 2006: Retention rate = percent enrolled in fall 2007

Retention rates for new fall 2005 students to fall 2006 and retention of new fall 2006 students to fall 2007 are provided in the table on the next page.

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## Enrollment of New Degree-Seeking Undergraduates One Year Later

<b>From Fall 2005 to Fall 2006</b>	<b>BHSU</b>	<b>DSU</b>	<b>NSU</b>	<b>SDMT</b>	<b>SDSU</b>	<b>USD</b>	<b>System</b>
New Degree Seeking Fall 2005	660	314	383	372	1,878	1,165	4,772
Enrolled in Same University Fall 2006	327	199	216	275	1,427	807	3,251
Percent Retained Same University	49.6%	63.4%	56.4%	73.9%	76.0%	69.3%	68.1%
Enrolled in the System Fall 2006	356	219	232	294	1,497	849	3,447
Percent Retained in System	53.9%	69.8%	60.6%	79.0%	79.7%	72.9%	72.2%
<b>From Fall 2006 to Fall 2007</b>	<b>BHSU</b>	<b>DSU</b>	<b>NSU</b>	<b>SDMT</b>	<b>SDSU</b>	<b>USD</b>	<b>System</b>
New Degree Seeking Fall 2006	660	320	381	285	1,947	1,128	4,721
Enrolled in Same University Fall 2007	382	220	234	216	1,465	794	3,311
Percent Retained Same University	57.9%	68.8%	61.4%	75.8%	75.2%	70.4%	70.1%
Enrolled in the System Fall 2007	416	235	248	237	1,530	833	3,499
Percent Retained in System	63.0%	73.4%	65.1%	83.2%	78.6%	73.9%	74.1%
<b>Comparison 2005-06 with 2006-07</b>	<b>BHSU</b>	<b>DSU</b>	<b>NSU</b>	<b>SDMT</b>	<b>SDSU</b>	<b>USD</b>	<b>System</b>
<b>Same University (Change in Percent)</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>System (Change in Percent)</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>

- For new fall 2006 students, the one-year “same university” retention rates range from 57.9 percent at BHSU to 75.8 percent at SDSM&T.
- For the same group, the one-year “system” retention rates range from 63 percent at BHSU to 83.2 percent at SDSM&T.

### Steady Improvement in Retention Rates

- The “same university” retention rates increased at five universities. The increases ranged from 1.1 percent at USD to 8.3 percent at BHSU. SDSU had a slight decrease from 76 percent to 75.2 percent.
- The “system” retention rates also increased at five universities. The increases ranged from 1 percent at USD to 9.1 percent at BHSU. SDSU had a slight decrease from 79.7 percent to 78.6 percent.

### Retention Impacted by Many Factors

Student retention is affected by a number of variables, including the student’s high school preparation, the student’s educational and career goals, the economy, and family circumstances. Some students enroll with the intention of transferring after their first year. Other students transfer because their desired program is not available. One of the objectives of Gov. Rounds’ 2010 Education Initiative (<http://www.2010education.com>) calls for expanding the number of citizens with postsecondary education and training by 20 percent. The goal is to increase the number of graduates from Board of Regents’ associate-degree programs by 10 percent and to increase the number of graduates from bachelor-degree programs by 20 percent.