A Regional Science Education Center at Northern State University represents a significant contribution to the Aberdeen campus. A proposed two-story, 50,000 square-foot, $25,175,000 million building will be shared by three departments: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. In addition to laboratory classrooms, the new facility will also house three general classrooms and an administrative/faculty suite. Two of the three general classrooms will support 35 students each; the other will seat 100 students, with retractable lecture-style seating to be flexible and adaptable to multiple uses.

Biology programs at NSU have grown rapidly in the past few years. Graduates are prepared for a variety of high-need areas, including teaching, health care, and advanced studies. Some programs already are at maximum space capacity. Future growth and expansion of the sciences at Northern State University will be limited without critical additional space to meet programmatic needs.

NSU’s Regional Science Education Center will serve four distinct purposes:

1. Provide students and staff state-of-the-art flexible research and learning laboratories, innovative learning spaces, and collaborative interaction spaces.

2. Provide faculty access to dedicated research facilities, with opportunities to enhance their own research efforts and increase opportunities for engaging students in research.

3. Provide professional development opportunities for current and future K-12 science teachers to increase knowledge of science content and pedagogy. This meets NSU’s objective to support and sustain excellent elementary and secondary science education throughout the region and across South Dakota.

4. Provide K-12 students the opportunity to learn and become excited about the sciences, with a goal of promoting STEM educational opportunities, a strategic initiative promoted by Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

A new Regional Science Education Center will:

- Create chemistry lab space that meets requirements for American Chemical Society (ACS) accreditation.

- Create a STEM education lab for education students to practice hands-on classroom activities. Stations would include proper equipment and lab supplies, allowing students to create lesson plans and activities.

- Create dedicated lab space for courses that pertain only to the major. Currently, introductory courses and courses for majors must share lab space.

- Create dedicated research lab space instead of using teaching labs. Sharing lab space makes research difficult and also creates safety concerns.

- Provide multiple lab and storage spaces with high-tech ventilation for dissection and chemical storage.
- Collaborate with the NSU School of Education to create a new combined degree, integrating biology and human performance & fitness.
- Establish a Center of Environmental Studies, as envisioned in an EPSCoR grant award to NSU.
- Expand health care offerings and programs at NSU. Using accelerated nursing as a model, this could lead to expansion into other areas of health care in high demand regionally.
- Create a new master’s degree in science teaching, tailored for both recent graduates and current high school teachers.
- Collaborate with K-12 students and teachers across the region to offer more opportunities for students and teachers to become engaged in science fields.
- Create efficiencies in use of supplies and equipment.
- Provide space needed for expansion of programs and course offerings designed to enhance current programs at Northern State University.
- Enhance collaboration among NSU faculty, research faculty from other institutions, and science educators throughout the region.