



News Release

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Opportunity Scholarship Positively Impacts Degree Completion

MADISON, S.D. – Since 2004, when the merit-based South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship was first awarded, observers have credited the scholarship with keeping students in college and completing a degree. Now there are new data to prove that point.

An analysis by the South Dakota Board of Regents looked at 2,652 students from South Dakota high schools who began a bachelor's degree program in fall 2008 at one of the six state universities. Six years after initially enrolling, nearly nine in 10 students (88.5 percent) who received a South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship either had graduated or were still enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

For students who did not receive or did not qualify for the scholarship, only six in 10 students had similarly persisted.

Narrowing the data further, 84.3 percent of the Opportunity Scholarship recipients had graduated with a degree at some time during the six-year timeframe, compared to just over half of all other students. And, nearly 85 percent of students receiving the scholarship had persisted at South Dakota institutions, as opposed to transferring to colleges or universities in other states.

“In summary, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship recipients appear—in comparison with other students—dramatically more likely to persist toward degree completion,” the report noted. Researchers found this was due to the scholarship recipients' high degree of academic success in high school, exposure to a variety of rigorous academic subjects, and the scholarship's requirement that students must make adequate progress toward on-time graduation.

After more than a decade in operation, the Opportunity Scholarship has provided funding to more than 12,000 students studying in South Dakota colleges, universities, and technical institutes.

A link to the Board of Regents' analysis can be found at
https://www.sdbor.edu/theboard/agenda/2015/June/20_BOR0615.pdf.