



News Release

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Regents Seek Dakota's Promise for College Students in Need

PIERRE, S.D. – To keep the cost of a public higher education affordable, the South Dakota Board of Regents will ask policymakers to create a comprehensive state financial aid program, Dakota's Promise, aimed at closing the gap between existing financial aid and the cost of attendance for South Dakota college students.

“Our state remains at the very bottom when it comes to state-funded scholarship programs,” said Regents President Bob Sutton. “After exhausting all existing aid options, many of our students still have unmet need. That gap may prevent a student from attending college or completing their degree.

“This new financial aid model, Dakota's Promise, is a significant step forward to support those students who most need our help,” Sutton said.



The \$3.5 million financial aid request, referred to as Dakota's Promise, would have the state fill the funding gap for a student after every other available source—from the student, student's family, institution, and federal government—has been used. In future years, this funding would continue to scale until an estimated 5,928 students receive financial aid support annually at a cost of \$10.3 million.

The regents' budget request overall seeks \$6.5 million in additional ongoing state resources linked to specific priorities of the six public universities and two special schools. The regents have asked Gov. Dennis Daugaard to make the student aid model, along with salary policy for all state employees, his highest priorities in the recommended Fiscal Year 2019 budget.

In addition, the regents will request new state investments to ensure student retention and graduation across the public university system and to maintain and repair campus buildings.

Student retention initiatives include targeted efforts to support engineering students in collegiate-level mathematics courses at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology and South Dakota State University. Other initiatives to improve retention at Black Hills State University, Dakota

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State University, Northern State University, and University of South Dakota will also be pursued. A total of \$1.16 million is being requested for these student success efforts. Another request seeks to restore last year's budget cut to higher education's maintenance and repair funds, which were used to help balance a state budget shortfall. The \$1.8 million request restores the cut, funds last year's original budget request of \$918,738, and puts the system at about 1.8 percent of building replacement values.

The board also identified \$3 million in a one-time budget request for the state's high-speed data network. The Rural, Education, and Economic Development (REED) Network is a 10-gigabit per second network used by academic researchers, state and federal research agencies, and the state's underground science laboratory at Lead.

Since the South Dakota network was created in 2007, most states have moved their data networks to 100 gigabit speeds to accommodate ever-growing data needs. For example, the EROS Data Center last year sent data across the REED Network that was the equivalent of the entire Library of Congress every six hours, a 36-fold increase over five years.

The one-time request would update the north-south fiber path through the state to improve connections to South Dakota State University and University of South Dakota, as well as to Dakota State University and the Graduate Education & Applied Research Center in Sioux Falls. A Phase 3 project for future years would upgrade the rest of the network, including research sites in western South Dakota, based on demand.

The six public universities in South Dakota are major economic engines, generating \$2.66 billion a year in annual economic impact within the state. The board's budget request of \$6.5 million in additional funding represents a 3 percent increase over the current \$211 million in base state funding.