



News Release

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Universities See Growth in Non-Traditional Student Populations

SPEARFISH, S.D. – Traditional enrollment patterns at South Dakota public universities are changing. A new study by the South Dakota Board of Regents reports campuses are serving fewer traditional students, while significantly expanding service to new segments of the market, such as high school students and students attending college from outside of the state.

“These trends become increasingly important as the state seeks to get more high school students into and through college, as well as attracting the workforce necessary to drive the South Dakota economy,” said Mike Rush, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “As South Dakota addresses its demographic challenges, many positions in our workforce will have to be filled with people moving into the state.”

Researchers report that enrollment counts now reflect the ever-increasing presence of out-of-state students enrolling in South Dakota public universities. In the last five years, resident students have fallen by 9.7 percent to roughly 23,000 within the university system, while non-residents rose by 23.7 percent to about 13,000.

Further, the report noted a “meteoric rise” in enrollments by high school students, fueled mainly by new legislative funding for dual credit offerings beginning in 2014. Since 2012, high school enrollments in the public university system have grown by 650 percent, a net gain of nearly 2,000 students.

The report, “Enrollment Trends in the University System,” noted the South Dakota system is undergoing a series of crucial transitions, which demonstrate a growing gap between on-campus and off-campus enrollments. Overall, the data show a slow but steady decline in on-campus enrollments system wide, which is offset by a 6.2 percent gain in the off-campus headcount. As of this fall, three universities—Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, and Northern State University—now enroll more off-campus students than those on campus.

A distance education report, also delivered to the regents this week, supports evidence of how South Dakota’s public university system continues to evolve its programs and delivery to align with emerging enrollment trends.

The number of students enrolling in distance-delivered courses has risen more than 46 percent since the fall of 2010, compared with a growth rate of only 2.1 percent for system enrollments

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overall. Students enrolling in at least one distance course now represent 42 percent of all students enrolled in the public university system.

As the public university system adapts its services to address all of these trends, a committee of university presidents also has been discussing what types of new associate degree offerings hold the potential to attract new students to higher education. In its report to the regents, the committee recommended additional analysis and data gathering to determine whether there is sufficient demand and an untapped market for delivering more two-year degree programs. That committee's report can be found at:

https://www.sdbor.edu/theboard/agenda/2015/December/5_L_BOR1215.pdf.

The full enrollment trends study can be found online at:

https://www.sdbor.edu/theboard/agenda/2015/December/5_O_BOR1215.pdf.

The Distance Education Report is available online at:

https://www.sdbor.edu/theboard/agenda/2015/December/5_M_BOR1215.pdf.

For additional information, visit the interactive SDBOR Distance Education Dashboard at:

<https://www.sdbor.edu/dashboards>.