



News Release

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Regents Applaud New West River Higher Education Strategies

PIERRE - With the aim of increasing access to public higher education in western South Dakota, the South Dakota Board of Regents today adopted a preliminary recommendation from two of its presidents to create the West River University Consortium.

Thomas Flickema, president of Black Hills State University, and Charles Ruch, president of South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, presented the board with a series of strategies to make sure all residents in the region have easy access to higher education and can take advantage of the benefits and expertise the state's public universities offer.

Included in the plan is a new storefront higher education center at Rapid City's Rushmore Mall. "We are excited to have a one-stop access point where Black Hills residents can get information about all the public higher education offerings available in this area," said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett. "Ideally, this storefront location will assist people in registering for classes, securing financial aid, and serve as a site for workshops, training programs, or course delivery."

Among the recommendations in Ruch's and Flickema's report:

- Coordinate public higher education offerings in the region through a consortium approach,
- Identify programs that can benefit from course realignment and more collaboration among universities, and
- Develop strategies to involve public universities more quickly and directly in economic development initiatives.

The report recommended "a strong consortium arrangement as the mechanism to assure collaboration, to resolve issues of curriculum overlap, and to facilitate expanded access to higher education in the Black Hills region." Consortium members are Ruch, Flickema, and Regents' Executive Director Tad Perry.

"The new higher education center is just one of the more visible changes to come from the presidents' recommendations," Jewett said. "But overall, we can expect more coordination among all our institutions in what is offered West River. The

consortium will also frequently assess the region's higher education needs, so that the university system can adjust accordingly."

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