



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, July 7, 2004

Distance Degree Programs Accredited by NCA

PIERRE, S.D. – A regional accrediting body has given its stamp of approval to college courses and degrees delivered over distance by South Dakota’s public higher education system.

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) notified the South Dakota Board of Regents this week that it is accrediting all degree programs offered by the public universities through the regents’ Electronic University Consortium (EUC).

Each of the state’s six public universities already is fully accredited by the NCA. Earlier this year, the regents asked that courses and degrees delivered electronically via the Internet, two-way video conferencing, satellite, television, videocassette, and correspondence be reviewed to ensure quality of content and instruction.

Accreditation of the programs delivered through the EUC now means South Dakota public universities no longer need separate approval from the NCA every time a distance-delivered academic program is created, said Lesta Turchen, the regents’ senior administrator. “This extension of our NCA accreditation is a sign of quality assurance,” Turchen said.

The NCA review team, which visited the state in March, said South Dakota public universities are a model for collaboration, giving visibility and credibility to distance education. The reviewers noted that there is an “awareness of the importance of working together” and the state has taken an “innovative approach that brings your system together.”

Higher education has benefited from South Dakota’s technology investments, and the statewide interactive video network is a significant strength, the reviewers said. In a report to regents’ officials, the review team said integration of technology into academic and support structures—through system coordination and a single student information database—has now become “part of your DNA.”

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On the Net:

Electronic University Consortium: <http://www.sdbor.edu/euc/>