



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, August 18, 2004

ACT Scores Point to Importance of High School Preparation

PIERRE, S.D. – State and national ACT results underscore the importance of high school students taking the right kind of courses to prepare for college, the executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents said.

“Nationally, the ACT data show that fewer than half of college-bound students are ready for college biology or algebra courses,” Robert T. Tad Perry said. “However, when students commit to taking a challenging set of courses while in high school, their ACT scores improve and with it, their statistical chance for success in college.”

The ACT exam is a nationally recognized indicator of student readiness for college. Fifty-nine percent of the 7,408 South Dakota students who took the exam this year reported taking core coursework recommended by ACT for college-bound students. Those students taking the recommended core earned an average 22.6 on the ACT, while their counterparts who completed a less rigorous high school program averaged only a 19.9. ACT’s recommended core includes at least four years of English, and at least three years each of mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Students who focus on challenging coursework in high school may also qualify for the new South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship. The scholarship stresses the importance of high school preparation for postsecondary success, and encourages South Dakota students to remain in the state for their postsecondary education, Perry said.

The state will award its first Opportunity scholarships this fall, a \$5,000 award over four years to qualifying high school graduates who complete four units each of English, algebra or higher mathematics, and science; three units of social studies; two units of the same modern or classical language; and ½ unit each of computer science and fine arts. In order to receive the scholarship, students must maintain certain academic standards in both their high school and college classes. Application deadline for the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship is Sept. 1.

“We applaud the emphasis Governor Rounds and K-12 educators across the state are placing on the transition between high school and postsecondary education,” Perry said. “Clearly, the new high school graduation requirements proposed by the South Dakota Board of Education are a very positive step in that direction.”