



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2004

Lake Area Tech, Board of Regents Reach Agreement

WATERTOWN, S.D. – Lake Area Technical Institute and the South Dakota Board of Regents agreed this week to work together to bring more postsecondary education opportunities to students in northeast South Dakota. Lake Area students will benefit from program-specific transfers to the public universities, while the university system assumes ultimate responsibility for the college transfer general education foundation courses those students take.

An operational agreement will be signed by officials representing Lake Area Technical Institute; the Watertown Board of Education, which governs Lake Area Tech; the Board of Regents as the constitutional governing board for the six public universities in South Dakota; and the South Dakota Board of Education, which oversees postsecondary technical education in the state. The agreement was announced Tuesday in Watertown.

“This is an important step forward in the relationship between South Dakota’s technical institutes and public universities,” said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. “The agreement sets out a collaborative relationship between Lake Area Tech and the public university system. It is centered on recognizing our unique institutional missions and eliminating unwarranted course duplication.”

Under the agreement, the respective missions of each institution are more precisely defined and maintained. Local governance of Lake Area Technical Institute—including educational, financial, supervisory, and management control—is specifically reaffirmed under the pact.

Lake Area Tech will continue to offer its associate of applied science (AAS) degrees in technical fields. “Our mission that focuses on technical education leading to direct entry into the job market will not change,” said LATI Director Gary Williams. However, with the immediate addition of 13 program-to-program agreements, Williams said course credits in certain Lake Area programs, such as agriculture, may be applied to specific bachelor’s degrees at a public university.

“This is a tremendous advantage for our technical education students,” Williams noted.

Board of Regents President Harvey C. Jewett agreed. “Students have a keen interest in being able to transport their technical education to the public universities, should they choose to pursue a four-year or advanced degree,” he said. “Today’s agreement opens the door for those new opportunities.”

Jewett said most of Lake Area's program-to-program agreements will initially be with South Dakota State University, although agreements on specific programs transferable to other public universities also are being pursued.

In exchange, the public universities' distinct mission to provide education leading to bachelor or advanced degrees is reaffirmed. Under the agreement, the universities assume responsibility for teaching all transferable general education courses at Lake Area Tech. These are courses such as algebra, English composition, and speech, which would normally apply toward any four-year college degree.

Currently approved staff at Lake Area Tech will continue to teach such courses, and joint faculty assignments in the future are anticipated. At Lake Area Tech's invitation, the public universities will establish a presence at the host site in Watertown to deliver courses or undergraduate- and graduate-level programs.

State Education Secretary Rick Melmer, reading a letter from Gov. Mike Rounds, called this an historical occasion in the relationship between technical institutes and the public universities. Gov. Rounds wrote, "In this agreement we have technical institutes, the Board of Regents, and the public universities coming together to provide educational opportunities for the state's citizens. It is my hope that this becomes the model and approach to be used throughout the state, not just in Watertown."

"This opens up some exciting possibilities," Williams said. "The partners to this agreement will be working to make available to Lake Area Tech students other university courses and programs requested by our students."

Besides Jewett, Williams, Perry, and Melmer, those participating in Tuesday's announcement included Glenna Fouberg, president of the South Dakota Board of Education; Mark Schmidt, president of the Watertown Board of Education; Robert Mayer, superintendent of Watertown School District 14-4; and Peggy Gordon Miller, president of South Dakota State University.