



News Release

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Retiring BHSU President Receives Honorary Doctorate

SPEARFISH, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents awarded its highest honor Saturday to Thomas Flickema, who retires July 1 as president of Black Hills State University.

The honorary degree, Doctor of Public Service, was presented to Flickema in “recognition of extraordinary service and leadership to the South Dakota system of public higher education.” The degree was conferred at Black Hills State’s commencement Saturday in Spearfish. Regents’ officials say the title is reserved for individuals whose exceptional personal and professional contributions merit special acknowledgement.

“Tom Flickema has a special talent for building robust academic programs at the institutions he serves, by recruiting, selecting, and mentoring strong faculty,” said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett. During Flickema’s presidency at Black Hills State, the number of faculty members with the highest degrees available in their field increased from 53 percent to 77 percent. “Students are the ones who benefit from this emphasis on quality faculty and a diverse curriculum, leaving here with an education that prepares them for successful life experiences,” Jewett said.

Flickema came to BHSU as interim president in August 1994. He was named to the post permanently the following February after a nationwide search. His career in South Dakota public higher education also includes serving as vice president for academic affairs at Northern State University from 1983 to 1994. In addition, he held academic or administrative appointments in Michigan, Nebraska, and California. A Michigan native, Flickema earned his master’s and Ph.D. degrees in history from Wayne State University in Detroit.

Under his guidance, Black Hills State University has become the third largest university in South Dakota and a leader in liberal arts education. “He has worked very hard to improve student retention and expand the university’s reach through its off-campus course offerings and specialized research centers,” Jewett said. Jewett also noted that outside grant funding, foundation assets, and scholarship support at BHSU grew significantly under Flickema’s leadership.