



News Release

Contacts: Robert T. Tad Perry, Executive Director
tadp@sdbor.edu

Janelle Toman, Director of Information & Institutional Research
janellet@sdbor.edu

T: 605.773.3455

F: 605.773.5320

www.sdbor.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, December 27, 2006

Major Enrollment Report Examines Trends

PIERRE, S.D. – More students in the South Dakota public university system appeared to be interested in careers in engineering, nursing, and history, according to the latest data on major enrollment trends from the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Four bachelor degree-level majors—history, mechanical engineering, nursing, and civil engineering—experienced at least a 15 percent increase in enrollments when data is compared between 2002-03 and 2005-06 for those degree programs with more than 300 majors in the South Dakota system. Two other bachelor-degree majors had at least a 15 percent decrease in enrollments—computer science (25 percent) and elementary education (19 percent).

“This report appears to align with what we see as fluctuating market demands for certain college graduates,” said Regents’ Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. “There continues to be a growing demand for engineers and nurses, and students tend to respond to those market forces. Likewise, we are told there is an adequate supply of elementary teachers right now, and students are more likely to focus their interests elsewhere when the market demand is lower.”

Perry said the decline in computer science majors is concerning, but appears to be a holdover from trends first evident following the “dot-com” bust in the early part of this decade. At the time, laid-off technology experts, such as computer programmers, found a glut on the job market and certain university degree programs began to see a noticeable drop in new students.

Pointing to the 37 percent increase in history majors over the last four years, Perry said history as a major field is a popular choice for students interested in teaching, or as a gateway degree to a variety of management careers or professional occupations such as law.

The five most popular two-year associate degree majors in the South Dakota system were in nursing, followed by general studies, pre-nursing, pre-dental hygiene, and respiratory care.

The report also noted that 86 percent of the students in the public university system have a single major, while the remaining 14 percent were seeking two, three, or four different majors. These numbers are consistent with data reported in the last four academic years.