



# News Release

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## Scholarships Impact ACT Test Scores

PIERRE, S.D. – The executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents thinks the case can be made that higher scores on a popular college-entrance exam in South Dakota are linked to a state scholarship program started in 2004.

“Data received this week from ACT confirm that a greater percentage of our students today are achieving an ACT score of 24 or higher, which is the minimum score required to qualify for the Opportunity Scholarship,” Robert T. Tad Perry said. “In fact, the percentage of South Dakota students taking the ACT and scoring above a 23 composite has increased 5 percentage points since 2003.”

During that same time, the average South Dakota composite score on the ACT has gone from 21.4 to 21.9. That is a slightly better rate of improvement than shown nationally.

In March 2004, lawmakers authorized the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship program and the first scholarships were awarded to students later that fall. The Opportunity Scholarship is worth up to \$5,000 over four years to students who take a rigorous college-prep curriculum while in high school and stay in state for their postsecondary education.

Along with qualifying coursework, students must earn at least a 24 composite score on their ACT exam, or an equivalent score on the SAT, to be eligible for the scholarship. Students may use the Opportunity Scholarship at any of the 17 participating postsecondary education institutions in South Dakota.

Perry says the Opportunity Scholarship is one strategy in an increased emphasis on core course taking in South Dakota high schools to better prepare students for postsecondary education. “The state’s new high school graduation requirements also stress the importance of taking challenging core courses like geometry and chemistry,” Perry said. “The research seems clear that this kind of emphasis on core courses better prepares students for life after high school.”

**South Dakota ACT Trend Data 2003-2007**

Year	South Dakota ACT Composite Score	Percentage Scoring Above a 23 Composite Point
2003	21.4	32%
2004	21.5	34%
2005	21.5	34%
2006	21.8	36%
2007	21.9	37%