



News Release

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Regents' Request Reflects Base Budget Needs

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents has finalized a FY09 budget request to Gov. Mike Rounds calling for greater state investment in the base budgets of the public universities.

“This budget request reflects the priorities of the regents and Gov. Rounds’ 2010 Initiative,” Regents President Harvey C. Jewett said. “It focuses first on maintaining the base budgets of the institutions. Secondly, it meets the universities’ needs for a contemporary technology environment for instruction and research. Finally, it addresses our need to build university research capabilities, as well as fund significant upgrades to our science and engineering labs.”

The regents approved a request for slightly over \$10.1 million—or about 6 percent—in new base operating budget needs for the public universities. This would cover operating expense and utility funding shortfalls, ongoing utility cost increases, bonding for critical maintenance and repair projects, and faculty salaries. “We will ask state government this year to cover all of our normal salary increases, as it does for other agencies, so that this cost is not placed on the students,” Jewett noted.

Base budget needs are a serious issue, and becoming more critical over time. State spending on the public universities’ base budgets has not kept pace with inflation, Jewett said. To illustrate, he referred to data from the State Higher Education Finance Report showing South Dakota state appropriations per full-time student last year were \$4,848, compared to \$5,332 in 1991. It would take more than \$11.6 million in state appropriations to fully restore South Dakota public universities to their 1991 funding level, regents’ officials said.

“This is a defining moment in time. The deep underground lab project at Homestake and new investments in health care and medical research made possible by Denny Sanford’s donation have positioned South Dakota to become a major player in the knowledge-based economy,” Jewett said. “People will expect public higher education to partner in these endeavors. But we will need substantial new investments in our people, in cutting-edge technology, and in our facilities to make this happen.”

“If we blink and miss this opportunity, we simply will not be ready,” Jewett said.

The regents’ budget request includes \$5 million for a research investment pool that will allow the state to hire more research professors and graduate assistants, buy more release time for current

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professors to engage in research, and secure needed equipment and laboratory space. The state is also being asked to commit new resources to upgrade science facilities and laboratories and help pay for ongoing maintenance and repair of campus buildings.

Ongoing technology needs total about \$5.5 million in the budget request, with a one-time request of \$12 million to equip the new Northern Tier Research Network, provide for network and equipment upgrades, and pay for faculty development and training. The technology needs are tied to two major initiatives of the regents: the Northern Tier network, which is a high-speed research-focused telecommunications network, and the need to create a more all-encompassing mobile computing environment on the campuses similar to the technology environment students are experiencing in their high schools.