



News Release

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Regents Pleased with Governor's Focus on Research and Technology

PIERRE, S.D. – Members of the state's higher education governing board praised Gov. Mike Rounds for advancing a state budget that moves South Dakota closer to becoming a serious player in the national research community.

“New opportunities in health sciences research, plus the designation of the Homestake Mine as a deep underground science lab for the world and renewed interest in energy alternatives, put South Dakota in a unique position,” said Harvey C. Jewett, president of the South Dakota Board of Regents. “The governor's budget recognizes this by providing strong financial support to upgrade science facilities and laboratories on our campuses, and to create a high-speed data network that is absolutely critical if we are to quickly move massive amounts of research data worldwide.”

In his proposed budget, presented Tuesday to lawmakers, Gov. Rounds agreed to partner with the Board of Regents to upgrade science facilities and laboratories on the six public university campuses and at University Center in Sioux Falls. The governor recommends the state issue a 25-year, \$65 million bond through the state's building authority to finance the improvements. The bond would be paid off annually by \$2.3 million in state general funds and another \$2.3 million from tuition and fees paid by students.

“This is a serious investment in the facilities where science is learned and research is conducted,” Jewett said. “South Dakota simply cannot be competitive in attracting students, faculty, and research grants with sub-standard labs.” Without inflationary increases for university operations over the last 12 years, Jewett explained that science facility upgrades have had to take a back seat to higher priorities like paying utilities. “We did not get to this point overnight, but now is the time to get back on track,” he said.

Gov. Rounds also requested \$886,845 to support annual operation of the high-speed Research, Education, and Economic Development (REED) Network, along with 2.0 FTE for technical support of the data network. An \$8 million grant from the Great Plains Education Foundation will get the project off the ground, and the private partner that will build the network, SDN Communications of Sioux Falls, is providing further incentives to the state.

James Hansen, chair of the regents' budget committee, also thanked the governor for recommending funds to create a mobile computing environment on all public university

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campuses. “This will create the kind of technology environment that supports wireless connectivity and computer-aided instruction for students all across our system,” Hansen said. “This level of preparation is what businesses expect of our graduates and what K-12 schools expect of the teachers that we send them,” he said. The one-time costs to set up mobile computing can be accomplished with legislative approval to use existing university funds. The governor has included \$1.3 million for ongoing technical support of the system.

The governor’s budget also included more than \$300,000 to cover the rising costs of utilities on university campuses and \$1,632,999 for ongoing maintenance and repair needs, which Hansen said will help support the institutions’ base budgets. The Board of Regents’ system serves 32,148 students at six public university campuses and three off-campus higher education centers.