



News Release

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New Health-Related Programs Approved

MADISON, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents has approved new academic programs aimed at meeting specific health-related workforce needs in the state.

The board this week approved a new bachelor's degree in health sciences at The University of South Dakota; a minor in health at Black Hills State University; and a certificate in applied gerontology at Northern State University.

“We want to quickly respond to current and future workforce needs in South Dakota by creating academic programs that will prepare our students for employment in high-need fields,” said Regents President Harvey C. Jewett. “These needs are especially apparent in health care, including hospitals, public health and community agencies, and long-term care facilities.”

The B.S. degree in health sciences builds upon USD's already recognized leadership in health-related education. “This degree will address projected workforce shortages by preparing more students for employment in many health-related positions, as well as qualifying others for post-graduate training in specific health professions, such as physical or occupational therapy, dentistry, physician assistant studies, and chiropractic,” said USD President James W. Abbott. The degree will be offered starting in fall 2008, and is expected to have 80 students enrolled in the major by 2013.

The new minor in health at BHSU should attract students interested in a variety of careers and enhance their marketability in the workplace, university officials said. Since 2006, South Dakota has required its high school students to complete a health course prior to graduation. This minor will satisfy teacher certification requirements for school health education. The 18-credit minor will focus on health promotion, risk reduction, and health behavior theories and models.

The certificate in applied gerontology at NSU will prepare people to work in aging-related service fields, especially in assisted living and nursing home settings. This 12 credit-hour certificate is geared to both workers employed in entry-level patient care positions as well as their supervisors. An estimated 90,000 people in South Dakota will be over the age of 65 by 2020, with the elderly accounting for about 20 percent of the population in northeast South Dakota alone. These demographics clearly demonstrate a need to train more people to work with an aging population, regents' officials said.