



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, October 22, 2008

Growth Slows in Opportunity Scholarship Program

PIERRE, S.D. – The number of high school graduates this fall earning the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship is up again, but the program’s slower growth rate concerns some public higher education officials.

A record 1,159 students, who graduated from South Dakota high schools last spring, received the scholarship this fall to attend colleges, universities, and technical institutes across the state. The increase in recipients from last year was 24 students, or 2 percent. In 2007, the increase was 18 percent. The numbers were announced today by the South Dakota Board of Regents, which administers the state-funded scholarship program.

“The 2 percent increase this year is concerning, as it tells me the scholarship program has reached a bit of a plateau under its current structure and funding,” said Regents Executive Director Robert T. Tad Perry. Perry said it may be time to increase the value of the scholarship.

Number of Scholarship Recipients Attending Various Institutions

Currently, students may earn up to \$5,000 over four years by taking a rigorous college-prep curriculum while in high school and staying in state for their postsecondary education.

“With rising costs and inflationary pressures, the value of \$5,000 is not what it was in 2004 when the scholarship was first funded,” Perry said. When taking inflation into consideration, the award is worth only 80 percent of its 2001 value, the year it was initially introduced in the legislature.

Institution	Fall 2008	Fall 2007	Increase
Augustana College	99	90	9
Black Hills State University	63	58	5
Colorado Technical University	1	0	1
Dakota State University	36	45	-9
Dakota Wesleyan University	11	22	-11
Lake Area Technical Institute	14	9	5
Mount Marty College	14	14	0
Mitchell Technical Institute	5	5	0
National American University	1	0	1
Northern State University	49	51	-2
Presentation College	5	7	-2
SD School of Mines & Technology	98	99	-1
South Dakota State University	461	452	9
Southeast Technical Institute	15	9	6
University of Sioux Falls	46	44	2
University of South Dakota	239	229	10
Western Dakota Technical Institute	2	1	1
TOTALS	1,159	1,135	24

“We know that the Opportunity Scholarship is serving its purpose: encouraging students to take the high school courses they need to be prepared for college, and keeping our best students in state for their postsecondary education,” Perry said. But he said South Dakota also needs to be competitive to attract students, especially since many scholarship programs in other states offer bigger awards.