



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, January 30, 2009

New Research Center Associated with Sanford Lab at Homestake

PIERRE, S.D. – The state’s latest 2010 research center will position South Dakota scientists to participate more fully in experiments planned for the Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory (DUSEL) at the former Homestake Gold Mine.

Gov. Mike Rounds today announced creation of a new center at The University of South Dakota to conduct basic research in nuclear physics and astrophysics at the underground facility. “This effort will coordinate the work of scientists from several South Dakota universities,” Gov. Rounds said. “Our scientists will be able to participate significantly in experiments planned at the Sanford Lab at Homestake and DUSEL, and be better positioned for success in obtaining external funding for their research.”

The new center will pursue research directions that were identified by a national panel as the highest priorities for particle physics research at DUSEL. “This research has tremendous funding potential through the National Science Foundation,” Gov. Rounds said. Significant commercial development possibilities also are associated with materials production techniques developed at the center, he said.

This center will bring together current South Dakota faculty members—not only from USD, but researchers from South Dakota State University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Dakota State University, Black Hills State University, and Augustana College as well—to develop a critical mass of expertise necessary for the state to fully participate in large-scale projects at the underground lab, said Robert T. Tad Perry, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents. “The expected scientific outcomes will have long-term impacts on undergraduate and graduate education in this state,” Perry said.

Richard Benda, secretary of Tourism and State Development, agreed. “The center will produce super-clean materials needed for experiments conducted at the Sanford Lab, DUSEL, and in other research facilities around the world, contributing to South Dakota’s economic vitality,” Benda said.

The Center for Detecting Rare Physics Processes with Ultra-Low Background Experiments will be under the direction of Dongming Mei (DAWNG’-ming MAY) from USD. Dr. Mei is also the project’s principal investigator.

Since 2004, the state has created seven 2010 research centers aimed at growing the state’s economy by targeting investments in specialized research at South Dakota public universities. State resources supported the centers in their first five years of operation, after which they were to become self-sufficient and sustained only through outside funding. The state funds that had supported the four original centers can now be redirected to this and similar research initiatives, with no additional funds needed to support the new center.