



News Release

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76 Percent of South Dakota Public University Students “Swirl”

VERMILLION, S.D. – College students today are much more likely to earn credit from more than one institution, as well as take advantage of a growing number of distance education offerings. A new report shows that students at South Dakota public universities are no exception to this phenomenon known as “swirling.”

Only 24 percent of college students who were classified as seniors within the Board of Regents’ system as of last fall had completed all of their coursework from just one institution, the regents’ report shows. The remaining 76 percent had transferred in at least one credit hour from either another public university in South Dakota or a non-public institution. Almost half of those students had transferred in many more hours than that: at least 63 or more credit hours.

“The notion that a student will arrive on a campus as a traditional student and take all courses needed for degree completion is an experience achieved by an ever-increasing minority of students in their postsecondary experience,” said Paul Turman, the regents’ director of academic assessment and author of the report.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that about 60 percent of students nationwide who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2005 had attended more than one institution, up more than 10 percent from numbers reported 20 years ago. “Education officials refer to these students as ‘swirling,’ meaning that it has become increasingly possible for students to move between institutions from year to year, semester to semester, or even within a given semester, with relative ease,” Turman said.

Off-site course offerings in South Dakota’s public university system have expanded considerably through two fundamental approaches: the Electronic University Consortium (EUC) and off-campus centers located in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City. EUC was created in 2000, with legislative approval, to coordinate the distance education course offerings of all six public universities. The off-campus centers—University Center in Sioux Falls, Capital University Center in Pierre, and the Higher Education Center-West River in Rapid City—are focused on delivering courses and degree programs to a growing number of adult learners in their local communities.