



News Release

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State Identifies ‘Ready Adults’ Positioned for Degree Completion

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota and four other states have been invited to join in a grant-funded project aimed at getting more college-ready adult learners into the postsecondary education system.

The South Dakota Board of Regents will be briefed this week on the project, called *Non-Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners*. It is sponsored jointly by the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Earlier this year, South Dakota’s public universities were selected to participate in the project, along with New Jersey, Arkansas, Colorado, and Nevada.

“As other countries continue to outperform the United States in the number of postsecondary degrees awarded to their citizens, we as a nation face an urgent crisis in our ability to produce a highly educated workforce that positions us to be globally competitive,” said Robert T. Tad Perry, the regents’ executive director. Perry said adult learners—including those who did not pursue postsecondary education in the first place or who might have “stopped out” of the college experience—are obvious targets for degree completion.

While South Dakota consistently ranks at the top among states that send high school graduates on to some type of postsecondary experience, data show that this state “must dramatically increase the number of college graduates in the coming years to remain competitive,” according to the report presented to the regents.

The grant project in South Dakota currently is working to identify what are referred to as “ready adults,” which include those students who already have completed 90 credit hours or more toward an academic degree, yet have withdrawn or stopped out prior to graduation. Paul Turman, the board’s associate vice president for academic affairs, said it is these people who can most readily be positioned to finish up a degree program and either move into the workforce or advance their employment opportunities.

Overall, an 8.3 percent increase annually in associate and bachelor degree production is needed in South Dakota, the regents were told. That translates into an additional 411 degrees to be produced each year. All sectors of postsecondary education currently produce 6,996 degree holders in the state.

Turman said the goal of the project is to increase “ready adult” access to and success in postsecondary education, as well as stimulate changes in policy and practices to create an easier path for adult learners to be successful.