



News Release

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Report Confirms Regional Impact of South Dakota Public Universities

PIERRE, S.D. – An analysis of South Dakota high school students’ college-going trends confirms the significant regional impact of the state’s six public universities.

“This analysis illustrates the true regional nature of our universities,” said Robert T. Tad Perry, executive director for the South Dakota Board of Regents. “It confirms what we have long believed: students’ geographic placement significantly influences their postsecondary decision making.”

Perry said these data support observations he made earlier this year when a bill was introduced in the legislature directing the regents to prepare a plan for closing one of the six public universities. At the time, Perry argued that students tend to enroll at colleges close to their home, and closing one of the institutions would simply force many South Dakota students to choose a college at close proximity in a nearby state. The bill was defeated in a House committee.

“Our data do confirm that a particular strength of our university system is in its ability to meet the educational needs of South Dakota citizens on a regional basis, as well as provide highly-educated workers for careers in business and industry within those regions,” Perry said.

Using data from the 2006-07 academic year, the regents’ staff identified a total of 34,856 unique, non-duplicated students enrolled during that time period. The Zip Code for each student’s high school was then used to determine the county from which the student had originated prior to entering postsecondary education.

A total of 16,292 students were identified as entering the regents’ system having recently graduated from a South Dakota high school. Analysts then created a system-wide map and individual institutional maps to depict the spatial alignments for all enrollments in the regents’ system for these students (see Figure 1 shown on the next page).

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Figure 1
South Dakota High School Graduates Enrolled in SD Regental System According to the Number Enrolled at Each Regental Institution

