



News Release

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NSSE Survey Gauges Student Engagement on College Campuses

PIERRE, S.D. – Longitudinal data gathered from all six public universities in South Dakota over the past five years is beginning to reveal student engagement trends, with the institutions' strongest performance linked to student and faculty interaction.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from undergraduates attending four-year colleges and universities across the country. South Dakota students have been assessed using the NSSE five times over the past seven years. Surveys are completed by first-year students and seniors in the regents' system.

“The data demonstrate that a student's level of effort—within and outside the classroom—is a critical factor in college success,” said Robert T. Tad Perry, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents. “Those efforts can be positively linked to outcomes such as critical thinking, academic performance, and persistence rates as well.”

According to results from the 2008 NSSE survey, students at all six South Dakota universities acknowledged the quality of their interactions with faculty members as a special strength. “Trend data demonstrates positive growth in this area over the past seven years,” the report noted. The 2008 survey marked the first instance where both first-year students and seniors from South Dakota were above the national norm at the system level.

Perry said two important policy issues may influence this positive trend: expansion of the universities' research capacity, which fosters more joint collaboration between faculty and students, and a salary competitiveness plan that helps South Dakota retain more of its talented faculty. “When coupled with the advancements that have been made in research, the end result is better teachers who are more engaged with their discipline,” Perry said.

The NSSE survey also measures the level of academic challenge at the universities, as well as active and collaborative learning, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. Since 2002, all six public universities in South Dakota have participated in the NSSE project. Perry said the results are useful to campus officials in identifying what works and planning how best to engage students during their college experience.

The report may be accessed on the Board of Regents' Web site at <http://www.sdbor.edu/publications/documents/StudentEngagementReport2009.pdf>