



News Release

Contacts: Jack R. Warner, Executive Director and CEO

jack.warner@sdbor.edu

Janelle Toman, Director of Information & Institutional Research

janelle.toman@sdbor.edu

Telephone: (605) 773-3455

Fax: (605) 773-5320

www.sdbor.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, December 3, 2009

South Dakota Joins National Effort to Boost College Access and Success for Low-Income and Minority Students

PIERRE, S.D. – National data confirm that too few low-income and minority students enroll in college, and fewer still persist to graduation. The South Dakota Board of Regents' system has joined in a national Access to Success initiative to improve student outcomes on its six public university campuses.

South Dakota is one of 24 public college and university systems participating in Access to Success (A2S) by pledging to narrow the gap in college-going and degree completion rates that now separate low-income and minority students from others. The initiative is a project of the National Association of System Heads and The Education Trust.

“This is an important effort, because higher education is all about improving our state’s quality of life by producing a highly-skilled and educated workforce,” said Jack R. Warner, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “For South Dakota to prosper, we must increase college participation rates and improve completions for all students, while paying close attention to closing achievement gaps for minority, low-income, and first-generation college students.”

Baseline data released for South Dakota as part of the A2S initiative generally mirrored national indicators. Among graduates (both associate- and bachelor-degree holders) who entered the South Dakota system as freshmen, there were fewer under-represented minorities and fewer low-income students than would have been expected if such students had entered and completed at the same rates as other students in the state.

Systems participating in the A2S initiative have agreed on a common set of metrics to evaluate progress in meeting an aggressive goal to significantly increase the number of low-income and minority college graduates by 2015.

“This effort fits well with the regents’ strategic goals to improve all students’ preparation for college, increase their rates of participation and completion, and keep our graduates in South Dakota,” Warner said. “Our challenge is to educate more South Dakotans and position this state to be competitive both academically and economically with the rest of the world.”