



News Release

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Growth Continues in Distance Higher Education Courses

MADISON, S.D. – Growth in online learning at South Dakota public universities outpaces the national trend line, according to a report that will be presented this week to the South Dakota Board of Regents.

The number of students enrolled in some type of distance education course in the 2008-09 academic year was up 17 percent over the previous year, compared to a 12.9 percent growth rate nationally as reported by the Sloan Consortium. The unduplicated distance student headcount in South Dakota was 21,998, compared to 18,815 in 2007-08. Registrations for individual distance courses also increased last year by 14 percent to a total of 31,636.

“The popularity of distance education in South Dakota remains strong, and it shows no sign of letting up,” said Cathy Anderson, who coordinates distance learning programs for the regents. “In South Dakota, online education has truly become part of the mainstream of higher education.”

Availability of distance education is especially important to a rural state like South Dakota, said Jack R. Warner, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “Technology has brought about greater access to higher education, with more learning options for people who live in small communities far removed from a college campus or for those who are otherwise place bound,” he said.

Here are other facts about distance learners found in the annual Electronic University Consortium (EUC) report:

- Students enrolled in distance education coursework in South Dakota range in age from 16 to 78, with 61 percent falling in the 18-to-24 age group.
- The most common way to deliver distance education was by the Internet, with 65 percent of all distance courses utilizing that method.
- Internet-delivered courses averaged 10 students per section, with enrollments ranging from 1 to 278 students across all types of delivery methods.
- The five most frequently taught courses by distance were Composition II, South Dakota Indian Studies, College Algebra, Composition I, and Intermediate Algebra.

EUC was created in 2000, with legislative approval, to coordinate the distance education course offerings of all six public universities in South Dakota. Employing a convenient and integrated “one-stop” portal and point of contact for statewide distance education, EUC leverages the unique strengths of each public university to better serve students.