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Teacher Education Students Perform Well

MADISON, S.D. –Students enrolled in teacher education programs at South Dakota public universities outperformed the general student population on several important academic assessment measures, according to a report prepared for the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Teacher education candidates scored higher on average than the general population on the ACT sub-tests of English, mathematics, and reading. And a higher percentage of those same candidates passed the mathematics, science reasoning, and writing portion of a proficiency exam given to all public university students in South Dakota at the end of their sophomore year.

“There is a false assumption about teacher education candidates that a high percentage of underperforming students are enrolled in teacher preparation programs,” said Paul Turman, associate vice president of academic affairs for the regents and the report’s author. “These data certainly dispel that notion here in South Dakota.”

Teacher education programs at the public universities are tracking enrollment and graduates in high-demand teaching areas, such as science and math. “As a result, our education schools are implementing new strategies to increase the number of graduates in these critical subject areas,” Turman said. He said it is important to be responsive to the schools who hire their graduates by preparing students ready to teach in a technology-rich K-12 system and by offering more online opportunities for rural place-bound students to get their teaching credentials.

The most popular certification pursued by students enrolled in teacher education programs at the state’s public universities is elementary education, followed by special education, history education, music education, and mathematics. In the 2008-09 academic year, students were admitted into teacher education from within 31 different major degree programs at the bachelor’s level.

A total of 3,596 candidates completed their teaching degrees at South Dakota public universities between 2002 and 2008. The number of completers was 393 in 2008, down from a high of 629 in 2004.