



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: Tuesday, March 2, 2010

South Dakota Pledges to Significantly Increase College Completion by 2020; Joins National Alliance Focused on Raising Degree Attainment

PIERRE, S.D. – Signifying its intent to increase college completion rates, South Dakota has joined with Complete College America, a national non-profit organization working to dramatically increase the number of young adults with a college degree or credential, to set degree goals, and develop and implement aggressive state and campus-level action plans to meet those goals.

Unchanged for decades, the rate at which Americans complete postsecondary degrees falls far short of the country's needs and potential. About one-half of the students who begin college at a public or private four-year higher education institution in South Dakota have graduated six years later.

“In today's world, a college degree is extremely important. Not only does it vastly improve an individual's chances of landing a good job in a chosen career field, but it also provides the educated employees that modern businesses demand,” said South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds. “I applaud the Complete College America initiative for placing much-needed emphasis on the importance of finishing college. South Dakota has some of the nation's best and brightest college students, and we would like to see all of them finish what they have started. They benefit, and so does the entire state.”

South Dakota and 16 other states form the Complete College Alliance, a select group of leading states committed to significantly increasing the number of students successfully completing college and closing attainment gaps for traditionally underserved populations.

“Less than 40 percent of young adults in this country hold an associate degree or higher,” said Jack R. Warner, executive director and CEO for the South Dakota Board of Regents. “For this state and our country to be competitive, six of 10 young adults will need to hold a postsecondary degree or credential of value in the labor market by 2020. We are strongly focused on several strategies to build that pipeline of young workers in South Dakota, who are so important to the state's long-term economic and social well-being.”

Data show there are 113,496 South Dakota citizens who have completed some college, but have no degree. The public university system is already working on a goal to re-enroll 2,657 of those individuals who left college without a degree in the last five years. These people are referred to as “ready adults,” which include those who already have completed 90 credit hours or more toward an academic degree, yet have withdrawn or stopped out prior to graduation.

Complete College – 2

Established in 2009, Complete College America will provide South Dakota with practical support to help implement a range of strategies that will bring needed changes in the culture and practices of its public postsecondary institutions. Alliance states will receive in-depth technical support from America's leading experts on improving college success, including assistance in building consensus for reform, developing policy action plans, and guidance on applying for and effectively using federal funding to produce more degrees.

Five national foundations are providing multi-year support to Complete College America, including the Carnegie Corp. of New York, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education.