



News Release

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Nursing Degree Targets RNs Holding Two-year Degrees

VERMILLION, S.D. – The University of South Dakota has received permission to begin offering a bachelor of science in nursing degree. The program, however, is available only to those registered nurses who already hold a two-year degree.

The Board of Regents today approved the request, with most courses to be offered online to current RNs who will pay full program costs through the existing self-support tuition rate. USD is expected to accept students starting in summer 2011, after approval from the state Board of Nursing. No new state resources or additional student fees were requested to implement the program.

“As a state, we are aging and so is the existing nursing workforce,” said Regents President Terry Baloun. “We see a strong demand for additional nurses, especially those who will have the preparation and experience that comes with a four-year nursing degree.”

Due to the direction of the nursing profession and the state’s workforce needs, regents became convinced of the program’s viability, Baloun said. “There is a long-term need for registered nurses, and those RNs who have graduated from the two-year nursing program need convenient access to a bachelor’s degree in order to advance in their careers or be eligible for admission into graduate programs in the health care field,” he said.

USD’s associate degree in nursing will continue with no changes, since it produces the majority of the system’s two-year degrees and there will continue to be strong demand across South Dakota to hire entry-level nurses with an associate degree. Likewise, the long-standing B.S. degree in nursing at South Dakota State University will continue, as will SDSU’s Upward Mobility program for RNs. USD also intends to continue its “one-plus-one” arrangement with Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, so that Lake Area’s licensed practical nursing graduates can complete courses for the USD associate degree in nursing and become registered nurses.