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Report Documents Impact of Opportunity Scholarship

BROOKINGS, S.D. – The latest annual report from the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship program shows the state-funded scholarship continues to meet its objectives to encourage students to prepare well for college-level work and remain in South Dakota for their postsecondary education.

A total of 7,342 South Dakota high school graduates have earned the scholarship since it was first offered in 2004, according to the report. The program experienced a 42 percent increase in enrollments over the past seven years, with the largest-ever number of scholarship recipients enrolled last fall.

The \$5,000, four-year scholarship is open to South Dakota high school graduates who complete a rigorous college-prep curriculum, obtain a 24 or higher ACT composite score, and remain in state for their postsecondary studies.

Other highlights from the Opportunity Scholarship annual report:

- Since the scholarship began in 2004, students requiring remediation in math has dropped by 8 percent and English remediation has declined by 3.4 percent.
- 29 percent of South Dakota high school graduates obtained a 24 or higher ACT score in 2010, a marked increase from 22 percent in the year leading up to implementation of the scholarship program.
- Retention rates for high-achieving students in South Dakota have increased since the scholarship began. Eighty-eight percent of Opportunity Scholarship recipients are now retained in state into their fourth year of college studies, compared to 80 percent of those students in pre-scholarship days.
- Engineering is the most common major among Opportunity Scholarship recipients. As a rule, recipients are more likely to enroll in majors resulting in career areas such as medicine, science, mathematics, engineering, and business.
- South Dakota State University has enrolled the most scholarship recipients, about 40 percent each year of the program, followed by the University of South Dakota, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Augustana College, and Black Hills State University. Those five schools accounted for more than 82 percent of all recipients.