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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Wednesday, April 2, 2014

## **Redesign of Educational Leadership Programs Moves Forward**

MADISON, S.D. – A statewide workgroup has recommended redesign of education leadership programs that prepare principals to work in South Dakota K-12 schools.

A nearly two-year review resulted in recommendations for a shared program to be implemented collaboratively by the state universities that offer instruction in educational leadership. The plan is to bring back details to the South Dakota Board of Regents for program approval by the end of this year. The review, led by former state Education Secretary Rick Melmer and retired educator Jim Parry, was supported by the Bush Foundation of St. Paul, Minn.

The public university system is already engaged in redesigning its teacher preparation programs, including transition to a year-long residency before students graduate. “It makes perfect sense to also look at how we prepare the building leaders who work closely with those teachers,” said Sam Gingerich, chief academic officer for the South Dakota Board of Regents and a member of the workgroup. “Studies show that highly qualified building leadership is second only to classroom instruction among those school-related factors that contribute to what students learn,” he said.

Too often, existing principal preparation programs focus on theory and graduates do not get enough exposure to the day-to-day realities of instructional leadership, Gingerich explained.

Initial plans call for a shared academic program among the public universities, with common coursework offered by any of the university partners along with a smaller set of courses reflecting the particular strengths of the separate institutions. “A priority for the new program is integrating coursework and the internship, so principal candidates learn and apply research-based knowledge and skills in a field setting,” Gingerich said. He said the programs will require strong partnerships with practitioners from K-12 schools, who can help co-teach and mentor principal candidates.

The workgroup also recognized the challenges to develop and retain effective principals in rural South Dakota. The group recommends that preparation programs “address rural demographics in a creative and responsive manner which equips and supports principals for the realities of rural settings.”