



News Release

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Public Health Focus of Joint Master's Degree

VERMILLION, S.D. – A new initiative between the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University will lead to a master of public health degree, with a special focus on rural health issues and higher levels of training for healthcare practitioners across the state.

Both universities requested authority from the South Dakota Board of Regents to grant the public health degree, but the collaborative nature of the program means each university will contribute courses, faculty, resources, and expertise toward the end result, said Jack Warner, the regents' executive director and CEO. The board approved the new degree to be implemented starting this fall and through online delivery.

The master of public health degree is the most widely recognized professional credential for leadership and practice in public health. However, a 2009 survey indicated only 2 percent of South Dakota's public health workers had a graduate degree in public health. Students currently must leave the state to pursue the MPH degree. Graduates of this program will be trained in illness prevention, contemporary health promotion, and data analysis.

Student interest in health-related career fields continues to grow across South Dakota. For example, USD reports its health sciences major has grown to 400 students after just three years as an approved degree program.