



News Release

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Salaries at Top of Budget Concerns for Public Universities

SPEARFISH, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents decided today that salary increases for its employees and other state workers will top all other budget priorities for the coming year.

In its budget request to Gov. Dennis Daugaard, the regents asked Daugaard to make salary adjustments for all state workers the highest priority when he puts together a recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2013. “After three years of no salary increases at the state level, we believe a salary policy of 4 percent or more is justified,” said Regents President Kathryn Johnson. “Because our public universities must compete in a national market for faculty and researchers, we simply have to offer competitive salaries to retain and recruit the very best talent that is available,” she said.

The budget request seeks \$11.9 million in new state resources linked to specific priorities of the public university system, which includes the six state universities and special schools for the deaf and the blind and visually impaired. In addition, the Board of Regents asked that \$10.6 million in federal stimulus dollars, which had been plugged into its budget during the recent economic downturn, be replaced by state general funds so that critical ongoing budget needs may be met. Those federal funds are no longer available to the state after the current fiscal year ends next June 30.

Ongoing requests include \$338,524 to support the E-Learning Center at Northern State University and to offer new developmental courses there that prepare students for college-level instruction in English and mathematics.

Nearly \$5.2 million of the budget request is targeted to specific workforce development initiatives in the health care fields. These resources will be used to expand the state’s ability to educate and train more physicians, nurses, physician assistants, and doctors of nursing practice in South Dakota. Regents’ officials acknowledge this is a critical need given the aging demographics of the state.

The regents also requested \$2.4 million to create a Ph.D. degree program in physics to support the laboratory under development at the former Homestake Gold Mine. South Dakota is one of only two states in the country that does not offer a doctoral degree in physics.

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Included in the regents' budget request is \$4 million in one-time funding for initiatives important to the South Dakota economy, specifically projects to produce more college graduates and to advance the state's research agenda. Half of those resources will be dedicated to "student success" initiatives to keep more students in college to complete their degrees, with a goal of graduating more than 400 additional students each year by 2025. The other \$2 million would create a revolving account for research infrastructure, such as start-up funds for faculty hires, requests for scientific equipment purchases, and matching funds for research and industry partnerships. The revolving funds would be granted to individual universities and the pool would be replenished as research grows.