



News Release

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Higher Education Focus of Statewide Town Meetings

PIERRE, S.D. – Members of the South Dakota Board of Regents will take to the road this fall for a series of town meetings statewide on public higher education.

The first of what will be 15 to 20 of these meetings is scheduled Monday, Sept. 19, at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, hosted by District 5 lawmakers. The event begins at 7 p.m. Representatives of the Board of Regents, its staff, and public university presidents will be on hand to visit with area residents.

Other town meetings this month will be held Sept. 21 in Aberdeen and Sept. 22 in Webster. Additional meetings in communities across South Dakota are confirmed for October, November, and December.

“Our challenge as a public university system is to plan ahead as South Dakota emerges from the current economic downturn,” said Jack R. Warner, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “Higher education and workforce development go hand in hand, and our priorities must reflect that close relationship.”

Warner said the most important thing public universities can do is to enroll and graduate more citizens in order to build South Dakota’s economy. Additionally, he said it is very important to attract new residents to South Dakota, since the state’s aging demographic means more young people are needed to serve as a future workforce. Another priority is to leverage university-based research and development that contributes to South Dakota’s economic growth, and expand graduate-degree programs to produce more highly-skilled workers.

Ideas exchanged at the town meetings this fall will help South Dakota’s public universities plan for the future. “These town meetings are an important part of what we do every few years—go into local communities across the state, find out what is on people’s minds, and exchange ideas,” said Kathryn Johnson, president of the Board of Regents. “We have been doing these town meetings since 2001, where local legislators serve as our hosts. We welcome the public’s participation,” she said.