



News Release

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More Students Qualifying for Opportunity Scholarship

PIERRE, S.D. – A state-funded merit scholarship supports nearly 350 more South Dakota college freshmen this fall than when the program first started in 2004. Preliminary data report a total of 1,176 incoming freshmen received the Opportunity Scholarship this fall, a 42 percent increase since the first 828 students entered six years ago.

The South Dakota Board of Regents administers the scholarship program. Students may earn up to \$5,000 over four years by taking a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum while in high school and staying in state for their postsecondary education. The number of first-time Opportunity Scholarship recipients this fall was up 5 percent over last year, after a 4 percent decline in newly-eligible students was reported a year ago.

“Students and their families recognize the value of a postsecondary education, and are preparing by taking the right courses in high school and performing well, so that their efforts can be rewarded with an Opportunity Scholarship,” said Jack Warner, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “We know, however, the full value of the scholarship hasn’t increased since the program started in 2004. With inflation, that continues to be a real concern,” Warner said. “We very much hope the state can see its way to increase the scholarship award in the years to come,” he said.

The 1,176 new Opportunity Scholarship recipients this fall surpasses the all-time high of 1,159 previously set in 2008. The regents, meeting this week in Rapid City for a regular board meeting, will be briefed Wednesday on the latest scholarship numbers.

Eighty percent of the scholarship recipients attend one of the six public universities in South Dakota, but 92 percent of the growth in numbers this fall came at those same six institutions. Warner said a priority for the public university system this year was to keep tuition increases as low as possible at a time when state funding support was reduced. Technical institutes saw an increase of five Opportunity Scholarship recipients this fall. There was an 11 percent decline in the number of recipients reported at seven private higher education institutions.

Two charts shown on the next page provide additional detail about the Opportunity Scholarship program.

Opportunity Scholarship Growth of Fall Cohorts Over 7-Year Period

	<i>Fall 2004</i>	<i>Fall 2005</i>	<i>Fall 2006</i>	<i>Fall 2007</i>	<i>Fall 2008</i>	<i>Fall 2009</i>	<i>Fall 2010</i>
<i>Entering Fall</i>	828	848	958	1,135	1,159	1,118	1,176
<i>Growth Overall</i>	**	20	130	307	331	290	348
<i>Year-By-Year Growth</i>	**	20	110	177	24	-41	58
<i>Overall Percentage Growth</i>	**	2%	16%	37%	40%	35%	42%
<i>Yearly Percentage Growth</i>	**	2%	13%	18%	2%	-4%	5%

*Opportunity Scholarship Recipients Funded Across First Seven Academic Years
(includes Fall and Spring cohorts)*

	<i>04-05</i>	<i>05-06</i>	<i>06-07</i>	<i>07-08</i>	<i>08-09</i>	<i>09-10</i>	<i>10-11</i>	<i>7 Year Total</i>	<i>7 Year %</i>
Augustana College	79	58	82	90	100	97	97	603	8.2%
Black Hills State Univ	36	52	56	61	65	55	79	404	5.5%
Colorado Tech Univ	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	0.1%
Dakota State Univ	23	30	46	48	36	45	55	283	3.9%
Dakota Wesleyan Univ	8	9	17	22	11	24	28	119	1.6%
Lake Area Tech	2	6	7	11	15	9	16	66	0.9%
Mitchell Tech	3	0	2	5	5	4	8	27	0.4%
Mount Marty College	15	15	10	15	15	9	12	91	1.2%
National American Univ	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0.1%
Northern State Univ	30	35	45	53	50	52	51	316	4.3%
Presentation College	4	7	11	7	7	9	1	46	0.6%
SD School of Mines	64	77	72	101	97	92	105	608	8.3%
SD State Univ	339	361	387	459	484	480	434	2944	40.2%
Southeast Tech	3	6	7	7	15	12	4	54	0.7%
Univ of Sioux Falls	27	28	35	48	46	41	33	258	3.5%
Univ of South Dakota	201	172	204	239	228	209	252	1505	20.6%
Western Dakota Tech	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	9	0.1%
	840	858	983	1,167	1,178	1,140	1,176	7,342	