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Off-Campus Education Grows in South Dakota

VERMILLION, S.D. – A report on off-campus education presented today to the South Dakota Board of Regents shows a strong five-year growth in enrollment and completions through distance education.

The report contains enrollment information on students who take coursework through distance delivery or at one of the state's three off-campus university center locations in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City.

The report says total enrollment, average enrollment, and total credit hours have increased each year for the past five years. Unduplicated annual student headcount rose 12.2 percent in the last fiscal year, an increase of 1,943 students.

The majority of students taking advantage of distance education in South Dakota are part-time undergraduate students. But the report also noted a large growth in out-of-state students taking distance courses. Five years ago 2,399 out-of-state students enrolled in distance delivery through the South Dakota public university system; this past year the number of out-of-state students climbed 95.6 percent to 4,603.

Course enrollment at the off-campus university centers has also seen growth over the past five years. Since 2007, unduplicated headcount at University Center-Sioux Falls has grown 10 percent. Unduplicated headcount enrollment at University Center-Rapid City and at Capital University Center in Pierre has grown 5.8 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively. The combined total unduplicated headcount at all three sites for the last fiscal year was 6,592.

As with distance education courses, the majority of students taking courses at the university centers also tend to be part-time undergraduate students. Students tended either to take all credit hours at a given university center location or paired university center credit hours with distance-based credit hours.

“This report confirms that distance delivery and the three university centers provide an outstanding service to our state by reaching place-bound adults who are unable to attend a traditional campus for their education,” said Jack Warner, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “By making education more convenient, we are effectively expanding the number of people the public university system serves.”