



News Release

Contacts: Mike Rush, Executive Director and CEO
mike.rush@sdbor.edu

Janelle Toman, Director of Communications
Janelle.toman@sdbor.edu

Telephone: (605) 773-3455

Fax: (605) 773-5320

www.sdbor.edu

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New Initiatives Spark College-Going Interest

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota colleges and universities are finding new ways to help high school students navigate the college application process and encourage postsecondary enrollments.

Piloted at nine schools in 2014, College Application Week is finding significant success in rural South Dakota. That effort grew to include 40 high schools last fall, and plans are to double the number of participating schools to 80 in the next school year.

Students may apply to as many as three participating institutions during the application week, at no cost. During the week, students engage in activities such as completing a college decision map and interest inventories, scholarship essay practice, hearing from teachers and staff about their college experience, and speaking with admissions representatives.

“This intensive effort can make a very positive impact on students, especially at schools where college-going rates have been low historically or students tend to come from underserved or under-represented backgrounds,” said Regent Kathryn Johnson. Strategies like this will become even more important as South Dakota works to meet growing workforce demands, said Johnson, who recently completed 12 years of service on the Board of Regents.

Johnson noted the state has set a statewide attainment goal of 65 percent of South Dakota citizens, ages 25 to 34, holding some type of postsecondary credential by 2025. That means that more students must consider postsecondary education, she said.

Last fall, the College Application Week resulted in South Dakota public universities receiving 800 applications from 354 students across the state. More importantly, more students are following up those initial applications by actually enrolling in postsecondary education.

A Board of Regents’ analysis showed that, two years after initial implementation of College Application Week, 318 students who submitted applications during the week were attending a postsecondary institution from South Dakota school systems that traditionally had low college-going rates. “Many of these schools have had postsecondary participation rates much lower than

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the state average of 66 percent,” Johnson said. “Our continued engagement in this effort is making a difference.”

Another effort, called proactive admissions, could be a reality as soon as this coming fall. Proactive admissions will allow a student to be directly admitted to college from a South Dakota high school without needing to first fill out an application or pay a fee. Students would receive a letter advising them of their admission and to which institutions they were admitted. A different letter would be prepared for students who have scores indicating a need for remedial coursework, encouraging them to take those courses as a high school senior.

A similar program in Idaho resulted in a nearly 7 percent growth in the number of first-time, in-state students enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation.