



News Release

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West River Nursing Programs Begin Transition

MADISON, S.D. – Plans are underway to transition bachelor-level nursing education programs in western South Dakota from two universities to one. The recommendation comes from a state task force that spent the past year studying efficiencies within the public university system.

At the same time, the intent is to increase the pipeline of new nurses graduating from the West River program. Paperwork prepared for the South Dakota Board of Regents' meeting this week shows a plan to increase admissions into the Rapid City-based nursing program from 48 to 72 applicants next spring, and to further increase admissions from 72 to 144 applicants annually, once necessary facilities are remodeled.

The regents today agreed to recommendations from the Senate Bill 55 Task Force to:

- Name South Dakota State University as the primary program delivering bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) degrees in the Rapid City area;
- End the Rapid City delivery site for the University of South Dakota's BSN degree program;
- Direct SDSU and Black Hills State University to develop plans to increase resources for future nursing program delivery at BHSU's Rapid City location; and
- Increase admissions to admit significantly more nursing students into the BSN program in western South Dakota.

“Reducing duplication of nursing education in a finite area was a key finding in the task force’s work,” said Brian L. Maher, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “But more importantly, there is strong direction now to ramp up university enrollments to produce even more nurses for this region and to ensure the program’s success.”

In an effort to streamline operations and limit unnecessary duplication of administration and services, the Board of Regents plans to wholly locate the Rapid City-based BSN program at BHSU's Rapid City campus, located off Elk Vale Road on the eastern edge of the city. BHSU would also provide the pre-nursing and applied sciences coursework that all nursing students must complete before admission into the BSN program.

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USD would no longer admit new students into its Rapid City program. All currently admitted USD students at Rapid City, including a fall 2021 cohort, would complete USD's BSN degree, with the final cohort expected to graduate in spring 2023. This change does not affect USD nursing students enrolled at other instructional sites in South Dakota.

“While change is difficult, we believe the direction to limit administrative costs and support efficient course delivery is appropriate,” Maher said. “The USD program has a history of educating dedicated, professional nurses for western South Dakota. We salute the faculty, staff, and students who have made that type of quality program possible.”

Maher said officials from both nursing programs are working with faculty, staff, and students to ensure an orderly transition to the collaborative program.