

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: South Dakota's Unified System of Higher Education

NUMBER: 1:0

1. The Constitutional Trust and Purposes for a New Century

The framers of the South Dakota Constitution created a constitutional board to govern the state's institutions of higher education. The framers subscribed to the view that public institutions of higher education could prosper only if their governance was committed to public officials who had the opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with the unique needs of the institutions and whose decisions could, thereby, remain untainted by the ever-shifting enthusiasms and priorities of politicians. The framers understood also that the best interests of the state could be served only if the responsibility vested in the board required it to balance the needs of individual institutions with the interests of the state at large and to ground its decision-making on informed academic principle untempered by parochial or partisan influence. From the onset of its legal existence, the Board has understood its constitutional charge to require that it operate the several institutions as a system of higher education.

The present form of constitutional governance first became effective in 1897. In the Regents' Biennial Report for the period ending June 30, 1898, Board President Harrison H. Blair commented upon the purpose of the Board as follows:

The fact that the people of South Dakota, by amending their Constitution have given the management of the State University, the Agricultural College, the three normal schools and the School of Mines to a single board is convincing evidence that the people have decided that there can be no conflict of interest or [rivalry] existing between the institutions, but that they are each a necessary part of the educational equipment of the State in which we are all interested.

As it enters its second century of existence, the Board of Regents continues to subscribe to the principles articulated nearly a century ago by its predecessors in office and seeks to govern the distinctive institutions in its trust as a harmonious system in order best to assure each qualified South Dakotan affordable access to quality academic programming.

In translating its century old charge to meet contemporary educational challenges, the Board has committed itself to integrating wherever practicable the collective

resources of the institutions under its charge. The Board intends to take maximum advantage of advances in technologically assisted instructional methods to enhance access by students throughout the system to educational opportunities whose quality and scope could neither effectively nor efficiently be provided by any one institution delivering programs in isolation from its counterparts. At the same time, the Board intends to take maximum advantage of savings that may be realized by the prudent use of contemporary administrative practices and technologies, reducing cost transfers to tuition-paying students and their families or to the tax-paying public while increasing the resource base that may be applied directly to the improvement of program quality.

The Board recognizes that the successful coordination and responsible integration of programs based at multiple institutions, each with a distinctive, legislatively defined mission and each with distinct local constituencies, can only be achieved through governance and administrative practices that encourage genuine collaboration among the institutions and with the Board staff. The key to successful collaboration lies in recognizing that the leadership of each institution is uniquely prepared to contribute to the collective assessment of the policy alternatives that must be presented to the Board.

2. Organizational Structure And Roles

A. Board of Regents

The Board of Regents has the constitutional responsibility for governing the Unified System of Public Higher Education in South Dakota, which encompasses its supervision, coordination, management, and regulation. The Board sets policy direction for the System, oversees the management of its resources (personnel, facilities, and financial), and establishes and monitors its educational program. The Board executes its authority through the adoption of policies, approval of programs, selection and evaluation of System and institutional executives, and the setting of annual budgets, tuition and fees, and legislative budget requests.

B. Executive Director

The Board of Regents selects an Executive Director who serves as the Unified System's chief executive officer on behalf of the Board. The Board delegates to the Executive Director the responsibility to lead a consultative process of System administration and coordination of the use of System resources. The Executive Director provides the Board of Regents with independent information and analysis and advises on matters considered by the Board. The Executive Director administers the policies of the Board and secures compliance with Board regulations. The Executive Director serves as the System's principal spokesperson on higher education issues.

C. Presidents and Superintendents

The Board of Regents selects institutional executive officers, presidents and superintendents for the eight institutions under the Board's authority. The Board delegates to the presidents and superintendents the responsibilities for managing and operating the individual institutions within the framework of a Unified System. The presidents and superintendents report activities of their institutions and their leadership to the Board through the Executive Director. System management and policy recommendations are considered by the Council of Presidents and Superintendents and forwarded to the Board through the Executive Director.

SOURCE: BOR, December 1996.