

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Planning Session

AGENDA ITEM: 2 – D
DATE: August 7-9, 2018

SUBJECT

Marketing/Communicating the Value of Higher Education

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

None

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

At the system level, the South Dakota Board of Regents receives no dedicated funding through state appropriations for continuing projects that involve marketing or advertising. Most marketing and advertising efforts within the system are conducted by individual universities. The focus generally has been to market and promote the universities themselves: to prospective students and their families, to current students, and to others who benefit from having a public university and an educated populace in their community and state.

Historically, the Board has conducted public relations activities that can be accomplished at low cost with existing staff and through earned media. Earned media (also called free media) refers to publicity gained through promotional efforts other than advertising. Examples of activities resulting in earned media are issuing press releases, writing letters to the editor or guest editorials, conducting editorial board visits, and conducting media interviews with Board staff, administrators, and regents.

Additionally, other outreach activities are intended to target people identified as decision makers or influencers in higher education. This includes activities that the Board staff and Regents engage in with legislators and other policy makers, such as the production of the Fact Book; special presentations to legislative, business, and community groups; legislative breakfasts; roundtable discussions; town hall meetings; and similar events.

As the Board of Regents continues its work to move the state closer to its 65 percent attainment goal, additional engagement may be necessary to increase public awareness around the important implications of postsecondary education for the long-term viability

(Continued)

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

of the state's economy. At this juncture in its history, the Board of Regents may wish to consider engaging in a more rigorous, system-level marketing campaign. The goal may be to stress the importance of higher education as a whole, the need for public and legislative support of higher education, the value of postsecondary education to a state and its citizens, and the overall economic impact of postsecondary education to the state of South Dakota.

As a preliminary step, Board staff contacted a marketing firm that has done work for several public universities and other education entities in South Dakota. A small consulting contract was drawn up to engage Epicosity, a firm located in Sioux Falls, in pre-campaign planning. Epicosity agreed to help us identify a campaign theme, develop strategies to incorporate institutions into the new marketing effort, and develop a scope of work and proposed budget.

Representatives from Epicosity will be available to the Board at this planning session to discuss a marketing strategy, identify estimated costs, and set out a scope of work for a possible RFP (Request for Proposal). (State law requires the RFP procedure if a state agency wishes to award a professional services contract exceeding \$50,000.)

ATTACHMENTS

None