

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs

AGENDA ITEM: I – E

DATE: June 10-11, 2015

SUBJECT: SDSU Associate Degree Completion Project

Since 2014, South Dakota State University (SDSU) has actively engaged in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education’s (WICHE) [Non-traditional No More](#) initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to identify the “ready adult” population – those who are close to having enough credits to obtain a degree, but have not yet returned to college. As part of their participation, SDSU has identified students who left the university with 50 or more credit hours and with at least a 2.0 GPA, sent letters, and explained options for completing an associate degree. Since 2014, this project has led to 11 former students receiving an associate degree. The attached summary provided by SDSU explains the process by which the university tracked eligible students and conferred the degrees.

RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Information only.

AA Degree Completion Project

South Dakota State University has recently taken strides to retroactively grant associate's degrees to former SDSU students. These efforts follow South Dakota's participation in the 'Non-Traditional No More' project led by Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and funded through Lumina Foundation for Education. This project assisted states in identifying their "ready adult" population – adult students who were close to obtaining a degree, but had not returned to do so. This project was also the basis for the development and implementation of the Bachelor of General Studies degree. This is a degree-completion program targeting students with sixty or more credits who had stopped-out without a degree. The General Studies major allows a student to return and finish a baccalaureate degree taking advantage of the coursework previously completed. Once the B.GS major was approved at SDSU, the College of Arts and Sciences began to explore the idea of awarding the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree to former SDSU students who left prior to degree completion and were found to meet the degree requirements of the two-year program. The College of Arts and Sciences along with Continuing and Distance Education collaborated to make this project a reality.

The original dataset included 2,962 students and pulled records from 2007 spring through 2013 summer. The data pull criteria included students who had completed 50+ credits and had a 2.0+ grade point average. An initial target population was identified from the original dataset, this included 429 students who last attended SDSU 2007 spring through 2008 summer. This data was shared with the National Student Clearing House to determine student status – degree awarded elsewhere, currently active student, or no data reported. Following the report from National Student Clearing House, 149 students remained. Of these, 15 students were non-SDSU home students (first program was through a sister institution), 12 held collection or account receivable holds, 3 were non-degree seeking, 3 were certificate seeking students, and 19 were students who already held two-year degrees and were not included in the outreach efforts. Degree audits were completed for the remaining 97 students in which 34 students were identified as meeting the requirements for the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree.

Updated mailing address information was gathered through the South Dakota State University Alumni Association. Letters were prepared for the 34 students, congratulating them on completing the requirements for the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree, signed by President David L. Chicoine and Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Dennis R. Papini. A graduation application was included and students were advised to complete and return to be granted this degree.

Of the 34 letters sent, 10 students completed and returned the graduation applications as prompted by the initial deadline for 2014 fall. One additional student submitted the graduation application for 2015 spring for a total of 11 degrees granted for the Associate of Arts in General Studies. One of the eleven students enrolled in classes for 2015 spring and is anticipated to complete the Bachelor of General Studies degree 2015 summer. Seven letters were returned undeliverable. On March 5, 2015, diplomas were mailed to the ten 2014 fall graduates.

The remaining 63 student files have been reviewed to determine degree completion requirements. Personalized letters will be prepared inviting these individuals to re-enroll at South Dakota State University to complete the identified requirements for the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree.

The response from students has been very positive. Sarah M. commented, “Wow, I think this is such a wonderful thing that you guys are doing! It's a really exciting way to continue to improve the lives of former students. I'm even more proud to call myself a Jackrabbit!” It is anticipated that the College of Arts and Sciences and Continuing and Distance Education will continue these efforts going forward following the similar process as outlined above.

Original Dataset (2007SP-2013SU; 50+ credits, 2.0+ GPA) – 2,962 students

AA Degree Completion Target (2007SP-2008SU; 60+ credits) – 429 students

National Student Clearing House – 429 students; 138 with no response data available; 291 students found; 142 students had obtained a degree; leaving 149 students for the target population.

Target population – 149 students

Target population credits complete:

- 33 students – 61-75 credits complete
- 37 students – 76-90 credits complete
- 37 students – 91-120 credits complete
- 42 students – 121+ credits complete

Target population not included in outreach efforts:

- 15 students – Non-SDSU students (first program through sister institution)
- 12 students – Collections/Accounts Receivable restrictions
- 3 students – Non-degree seeking (S.SPEC.SPEC)
- 3 students – Certificate seeking

Remaining target population – 97 students

Students meeting the A.A. in General Studies requirements – 34

Students awarded the A.A. in General Studies degree – 11 (10 2014 fall, 1 2015 spring)