Academic thoughts among Peterson's primary concerns as USD advisor

By Travis Gulbrandson travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net

Sara Peterson's office is located on the first floor of the northeast corner of I.D. Weeks Library, part of USD's Academic Commons.

Peterson said it adds an extra layer of involvement with the students, whom she serves as an advisor with the Academic & Career Planning Center.

"This section of campus is where everybody is during the day, and it's so convenient for students," she said.

Prior to March 2011, the planning center was located in the Arts & Sciences building and she often saw students for appointments only.

Now she sees them – and interacts with them every time she gets coffee at the Muenster University

"It's really nice, because it just keeps those academic thoughts a part of their thinking," she

"Academic thoughts" are one of Peterson's primary concerns.

As an advisor she works with all first- and

second-year students, except those in the business school, elementary education and fine arts, to complete their necessary general requirements.

'It's my job to take you through the gen eds, to make sure you get your math all done, and your social sciences, and the proficiency exam, and the other parts along the way," Peterson said.

She also assists students in finding internships and other opportunities that will make them more marketable to potential employers upon graduation.

"After 45 credit hours, I'll send them over to their (respective) department and they're assigned a faculty advisor, who takes them the rest of the way," she said.

Peterson is a former USD student herself, graduating in 1991. She came back to work for the admissions office in 1997, and began with the planning center in 2004.

A brand-new aspect of her work is USD 101.

"It's a semester-long class, and the whole intention is to help



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students transition to life at the university," Peterson said. "I have about 300 freshmen registered in six different sections, and my goal is to connect them to student organizations, to faculty and staff, to the resources that are on campus so they are aware of where they can go to get the help they need."

The class also will familiarize the students with the community as a whole.

"For our second class meeting, I've secured school busses, and we are driving all over Vermillion," Peterson said. "I've had smaller classes like this, with 20 or 25 students, and it's just been amazing how many students are not aware of

what is in Vermillion.

"I just feel like that's important that you feel at home not only at USD, but in Vermillion as well,' she said.

Along with pointing out the various stores, pharmacies, barber shops and banks, Peterson also shows the students the locations of the Missouri River and Clay County Park.

She said she has received a number of follow-up e-mails from students who utilized the outdoor recreation spots soon after the tour.

It's all about making a connection, she said.

"It only takes one connection, whether it be an upper-class student, a teacher, an organization –

if something makes them feel like they belong, they tend to stay," Peterson said. "So that is just what

the whole purpose of the first-year experience is – to throw as many opportunities as possible out on the table so that they might find something that connects with them."

Peterson said she's glad to help students through that process.

"When students come in here, they often have a problem," she said. "They don't know what to take, they don't know what to do with their major, they don't know where to go for help, they don't know how to get an internship, they don't know if their classes transferred or not.

"When they leave here, if (the problem) is not solved, we have a plan, and literally, 99 percent of them leave so happy because they needed answers," she said. "That is really, really satisfying."

Sanford Health giving USD \$20 million for arena

Sanford Health is giving \$20 million to the University of South Dakota for a new arena. It is the third significant financial move for the Dakotas-based health network in less than a week.

The university last year began raising money for a proposed \$50 million basketball and volleyball arena and adjoining sports médicine building that would connect to the existing DakotaDome. The university is "thrilled" with the Sanford donation. President Jim Abbott told the Argus Leader newspaper. "We hope this goes

a long way toward making our plans for an arena and an academic and sports medicine building a reality," he said.
"We're going to be beating the bushes as fast and as fierce as we can to get our alumni to make their own commitments so we can move forward as soon as possible."

The donation is an extension of a relationship Sanford has had with USD's medical school, business school and athletic department and does not involve naming rights, Sanford spokesman Mike Begeman said.

"It looks like a gift of bricks and mortar but there is a lot more to it than that," he said. "It's really an investment in people. This is going to help us recruit future doctors and physical therapists as well as people from the business school. It's a very broad scope.'

City officials announced late last week that Sanford Health, First Premier Bank and Premier Bankcard have secured the naming rights for the next quarter century for Sioux Falls' \$115 million events center under construction. That deal is for

nearly \$21 million. Officials also

announced last week that Sanford is giving \$10 million to South

Dakota State University for an indoor multisport practice facility.

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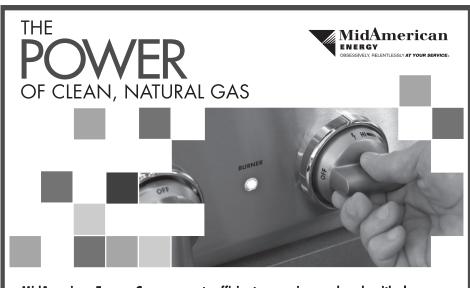


Will be closed on Monday, September 3rd for the Labor Day holiday.

The deadlines for the September 4, 2012 issue are:

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