

USD officials to welcome students to campus

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Classes are starting at the University of South Dakota on Aug. 26, and the school is doing its part to ensure students will know exactly what is available to them.

Friday, Aug. 23, marks the official start of USD Welcome Week 2013, which offers a variety of activities designed to inform new and returning students of as many educational and extra-curricular activities as possible.

“Welcome week is our opportunity to welcome the students to campus, and then allow them to kind of experience a little bit of everything they’ll have the opportunity to partake in while they’re (here),” said Lindsay Sparks, director of transitions and student programming at USD.

Move-in and check-in begins at 7 a.m. in the DakotaDome Friday, and will continue through 3 p.m.

Throughout the rest of the day and week, students will attend a variety of orientations, receptions and social activities.

“We have some athletic events, and there are some speakers, different entertainment and our traditions that we have on campus,” Sparks said. “We try to make sure that all those things happen within the first week so the students get an idea of ... what the year is going to look like.”

One of the more popular events is the Student Organization Fair,

which takes place this year from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24, at the old ice-skating rink across from the North Complex.

During the fair, students have a chance to visit with representatives from the more 120 student organizations at USD.

Athletic events are another well-attended feature of the welcome week, Sparks said.

“In the past couple of years, the women’s soccer team has had a home game during the first weekend, and we do a tailgate there,” she said. “This year, we have a football game during week, which will be awesome for our students to ... experience that excitement.”

The USD Welcome Week is still a relatively new event, Sparks said.

“We really started doing it this way just a couple of years ago,” she said. “We do it every fall, and we do what we call Spring Welcome Back Week during the spring semester.”

“This is what a lot of colleges across the nation do – an entire week of welcome. When I started here in 2010 it was just a couple of days, and between myself and a few other people in the Student Services area, we really tried to beef it up for the fall of 2011. That’s kind of how it’s been ever since,” she said.

Sparks said students have told her they enjoy the event because it allows them to experience so much in such a compressed amount of time.

“It’s an opportunity to be busy,” she said. “They don’t necessarily know what they can be busy with, so we try to give them a pretty packed schedule of events so that they know where they can go. They have programming going on, and it’s an opportunity to get to know people.”

“For the most part, we hear that they really liked it,” she said.

Since its inauguration several years ago, Welcome Week hasn’t seen too many changes.

“We look at what’s popular, what’s well-attended, what makes sense on the schedule, so we add new things depending on what’s going on on campus,” Sparks said. “This year it changed a little bit because we’re starting classes at 8 a.m. rather than 4 p.m. on Monday. So we really had to get creative, because we kind of lost a day of programming.”

It takes a lot of coordination to get that programming scheduled, she said.

“We start planning kind of as soon as it ends,” Sparks said. “We start reserving the space for the following year, and then we spend all spring semester and summer planning, coordinating and booking acts.”

For more information about USD Welcome Week 2013 and a full schedule of events, visit <http://www.usd.edu/campus-life/student-services/orientation/index.cfm>.



USD Welcome Week begins Aug. 23 on the university campus in Vermillion.

(Photo by Travis Gulbrandson)

South Dakotans ready for Labor Day travel

AAA projects 73,500 South Dakotans will travel more than 50 miles from home over the upcoming Labor Day holiday, a 6.4 percent increase over last year. Eighty-nine percent of them will be getting there by private motor vehicle, four percent by air and seven percent by other means, including cruise ship, rail, multi-modal and bus.

Nationwide, 34.1 million Americans will travel over the holiday, AAA predicts, a 4.2 percent increase from the 32.7 million people who traveled last year. The anticipated increase in holiday travel is predominantly due to increased consumer spending and the recovering housing

market. The Labor Day holiday travel period is defined as Thursday, August 29 through Monday, September 2.

“For many of us, our home is our biggest asset,” said AAA South Dakota spokeswoman Marilyn Buskohl. “As home prices improve, more families are feeling more comfortable about traveling.”

• Labor Day holiday travel volume across the country is expected to remain above the 13-year average of 38.9 million for this holiday

• The largest share of holiday travelers (46 percent) will depart on Friday, Aug. 30

• Monday, Sept. 2, is the most popular date of return with 43 percent planning to return that day

• The average traveler is expected to travel a round-trip distance of 594 miles and spend \$804.

Nationally approximately 85 percent of travelers plan to drive to their destination, an increase of 4.3 percent from the number who drove last year.

Gasoline prices are not likely to play a major role in determining whether we’ll travel this Labor Day. As of Aug. 20, the national price average for regular is \$3.537, down 4.8 percent (18 cents per

gallon) compared to the same time year. The average price for gas on Labor Day 2012 was \$3.83, the most expensive average ever for the holiday.

AAA forecasts gas prices will remain less expensive than last year based on current trends through the middle of August, but there still remains the potential for late-summer hurricanes and refinery problems that could send prices higher.

Nationally, more than 2.61 million leisure

travelers (eight percent) will arrive at their destination by air, a slight increase (2.8 percent) from last year’s 2.54 million air travelers. The remaining seven percent of travelers are expected to get there by other modes.

According to the survey of traveler intentions, the average distance traveled by Americans during the Labor Day holiday weekend is expected to be 594 miles, which is 32 miles less than last year’s average.

Median spending during the Labor Day holiday weekend is expected to grow to \$804, compared to \$749 last year. Travelers expect to spend 24 percent of their budget on transportation and lodging and 21 percent on food and beverages.

During the holiday weekend the most popular activities will be dining (57 percent), visiting with family/friends (46 percent) and shopping (43 percent).

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