

PLAIN TALK



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State Universities Losing S.D. Students

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – South Dakota’s public universities have seen enrollments of South Dakota students fall substantially during the past five years, according to a startling new analysis that the state Board of Regents will discuss Wednesday.

On the surface, enrollments appear to have been flat since fall 2010. But a closer look found the six universities lost nearly 4,500 resident students from 2010 to 2015, according to the report prepared by the regents’ central administration.

That plunge of 17.3 percent has been masked by surges in high school students enrolling in dual-credit courses offered through the state universities and by increasing numbers of non-resident students attending the South Dakota campuses.

The report carries a warning that in layman’s language questions whether the state universities can produce enough trained graduates to fill South Dakota’s needs at a time when a labor shortage already exists in many occupations in many communities.

“These trends imply a dramatic reconstitution of the regental student body, and have clear implications for the university system’s capacity to affect macro-level change in the South Dakota labor force,” the report states.

The report comes as the regents and university leaders consider how to respond to a sharp rise in two-year degrees granted by the four public technical institutes in recent years.

One step already moving forward within the regents system is changing the focus of the University Center at Sioux Falls to two-year associate degrees and placing the University of South Dakota in the lead role for its management.

Enrollments continue to slip at the center, which was intended as a common site for state universities to deliver courses to students in South Dakota’s largest metropolitan center. The regents built similar centers at Rapid City and Pierre during the past decade as well.

The enrollment analysis shows circumstances that need further diagnosis and don’t have simple solutions.

Since 2010, high school students enrolled in dual credit courses skyrocketed from 291 that fall to 2,204 this fall, a gain

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A WINTER WONDERLAND



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Wednesday brought to an end the gloomy days and snowfall that impacted the area for the past two days, in total dropping an unofficial six plus inches of wet snow in the Vermillion area. As the afternoon temperatures rose and the snow started to melt, residents of the community, including this beautiful dog (and its owner hiding behind the tree) headed out for a walk through Cotton Park.

Snow Impacts Vermillion, Region

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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As this week’s storm system moves out of the region, the past month will go down as one of the area’s warmest and wettest Novembers.

Vermillion recorded 8 inches of snowfall as of Tuesday morning, with additional light snow falling throughout the day.

That figure comes on top of the Nov. 20 snowfall, which measured close to 10 inches in Vermillion.

The two storms in the final 10 days of November weren’t that unusual, according to South Dakota state climatologist Dennis Today.

“Big snows in the late fall aren’t that abnormal,” he said. “This was just a little later than we often have them here.”

The NWS snowfall estimates as of Tuesday morning showed a wrap-around effect.

At the high end of the scale, an estimated 8-12 inches fell on northern Charles Mix County, Douglas County, and portions of Hutchinson, Turner, Clay and Union

counties.

As of Tuesday morning, Bridgewater record 10 inches of snowfall, Beresford 9 inches, Vermillion and White Lake each 8 inches, Salem 7.5 inches, and Yankton, Tyn-dall and Pickstown each 6 inches.

Mitchell reported 9.6 inches, while Sioux Falls reporting points ranged from 8.5-9.3 inches.

To the west, Clearfield reported 10 inches, while Kennebec and Ideal each reported 9 inches.

Earlier Tuesday, Nebraska reporting spots found Ainsworth with 7 inches, Verdel 5.8 inches; Bloomfield 5 inches, Wakefield, 4.8 inches and Neligh, 3.3 inches.

Area residents had reason to believe November was a tale of two months. November started unusually warm but then turned more seasonably snowy and cold. The two recent storms dumped heavy, wet snow on southeast South Dakota and northeast Nebraska.

The strong El Nino — the weather pattern that comes off the Pacific Ocean — helped created the unseasonably warm temperatures during the first part of

November, Today said.

“El Nino is partially to blame for the warm fall, but we also had a ridge of warm air consistently over us,” he said. “The warmth allows more moisture to be around and helped contribute to the big (storm) system.”

The arrival of December also signals the arrival of a warmer weather pattern, according to NWS meteorologist Matthew Dux.

The week’s forecast for the region calls for sunny weather with highs of 28 degrees Wednesday, 36 degrees Thursday and 39 degrees both Friday and Saturday.

“The warm-up that will begin this week and continue into the next week should see temperatures climb back towards 40 degrees or warmer,” Dux said. “This should melt or significantly reduce the snow on the ground.”

Look for the warming trend to continue throughout the coming month, Dux said.

“The December trends continue to support high probabilities of above-normal temperatures,” he said. “As far as

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Celebrating 35 Years Of Service And Sacrifice To Fire Department

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
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They are volunteers, civil servants, fearless, valiant and dedicated. They are firefighters.

For more than 35 years two men have served the Vermillion Fire Department selflessly, giving their time and skills to keep you and your property safe.

In June of 1980 Chuck Taggart joined the Vermillion Fire Department, the following November Brian Waage followed in his friend’s footsteps. Now 35 years after joining the department, the two men are facing the ends of their careers with the Vermillion Fire Department and both of them, along with everyone else who has or is serving deserves your gratitude.

According to Vermillion Fire Chief Shannon Draper, both Taggart and Waage have served as assistant fire chief for years. Neither man could recount how many. And Draper says, both have made



COURTESY PHOTO

Brian Waage, Shannon Draper and Chuck Taggart are pictured in this department photo.

his first two years successful.

“They are both huge helps,” he said. “I don’t know how to word it, but I would say that I have been here two years and I followed a chief that had been here for 30

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\$5,000 Reward Being Offered In Hummel Homicide Investigation

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
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A reward is being offered for information in the unsolved investigation of the homicide of Alicia Hummel.

The body of Hummel, 29, Sioux City, Iowa, was found in the late afternoon on June 1, 2015, near boat dock along the Missouri River at Myron Grove.

Final autopsy reports indicate her cause of death was due to drowning with contributing circumstances of an incised wound to the neck and blunt force injuries to the head.

This week marks the 6 month anniversary of Alicia’s death and law enforcement continues to follow-up



Hummel

leads and asks the public to provide any information that may assist them in this investigation.

An anonymous reward of up to \$5,000 has been offered for information leading to an arrest and conviction of the suspect.

Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe said in an interview with the Plain Talk on Wednesday that he is confident there is information out there that will help lead to an arrest and conviction.

“We have nothing new to report, other than the fact

that there is now a reward being offered for information that leads to an arrest and conviction,” he said. “We are trying to track down any information people might not have told us. We are hoping that the reward will stimulate someone to come forward with any information. They may have thought we already had the information, or for whatever reason, were not telling us what we know. But we are confident that there is more information out there.”

Individuals with any information are asked to contact the Clay County Sheriff’s Office at 605-677-7100.

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