



# USD aims to grow student numbers at med school

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Representatives from the University of South Dakota named an expansion of the medical school as being among its top budget priorities for FY15.

The plan would include an expansion in the number of students taking classes at the USD School of Medicine, as well as new undergraduate and master's degrees.

The reps presented their case before the South Dakota Board of Regents at a hearing Thursday afternoon in the Muenster University Center Ballroom.

One of the primary requests was the addition of 11 students per class at the medical school, which would equal 44 new students in all four years, freshmen through senior.

The amount requested was \$1,036,515.

"Our request is a very fair one, actually quite modest and reasonable," said USD president James Abbott.

This expansion would not require an actual physical expansion, but rather an intake of students on the existing campuses and one new

Frontier and Rural Medicine program site located in Milbank, Mobridge, Parkston, Platte or Winner.

"We'll have the first two years in Vermillion and the next two years in Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Yankton," Abbott said. "We're not asking for another city. We've asked the three cities where we have students in the third and fourth year to take more students, and they have agreed to do so."

"It's a significant request to ask them to do that and to ask the facilities to say, 'Look at Sanford, look at Avera, look at Rapid City Regional. Would you please take three more students per year and have them, essentially, trail, follow or work with your clinical faculty, your physicians,'" he said.

According to documents provided by the board of regents, the student expansion is being driven by a report from the state department of health and the 2012 Governor's Primary Care Task Force, which reported a strong need for physicians.

Forty-eight new physicians are needed yearly to keep up with

state needs, including rural care, an aging physician work force and an aging citizen population with increased health care needs, the report said.

Prior to 2012, USD reported having 52 medical students per year, equaling a total of 208 students, freshmen through seniors.

An increase would result in an entering class size of 67 students per year, totaling 268 students in the medical school overall.

Abbott said the university also hopes to make strides by offering new degrees.

"We would like to create an undergraduate biomedical engineering degree," he said. "We already have a graduate degree in biomedical engineering, so we're hoping to expand that, as we think that might be helpful for our state."

The degree program also would increase the number of students entering high-technology jobs in the state.

"We're looking for - I suppose every university is, actually - infrastructure for research, particularly in the hard science areas," Abbott said.

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