SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Academic and Student Affairs

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SUBJECT
New Program Request – BHSU, NSU, SDSU & USD – AA/AS in Career Pathways

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY
BOR Policy 2.3.2 – New Programs, Program Modifications, and Inactivation/Termination

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION
Black Hills State University (BHSU), Northern State University (NSU), South Dakota State University (SDSU), and the University of South Dakota (USD) request authorization to offer an AA/AS degree in Career Pathways. The proposed program will provide resources and guidance to students at the beginning of their academic journey. This program allows students opportunities to explore various career options, aligns those options with the appropriate academic major, and supports students on this journey by providing them with intensive academic and career services. The goal is to help students identify the academic major that best prepares them for their future careers goals and then facilitating a seamless transfer into their major of choice.

The intent to plan was waived by the Executive Director.

IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION
A summary of the program proposal has been included as Attachment I. Additional information on this proposal is available from the Board office by request.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment I – New Program Request Summary: BHSU, NSU, SDSU & USD – AA/AS in Career Pathways

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DRAFT MOTION 20250402_6-A(1):
I move to authorize BHSU, NSU, SDSU, and USD to offer an AA/AS in Career Pathways, as presented.

Full Proposal – AA/AS Career Pathways
BHSU, NSU, SDSU, USD

BOR Recommendation: The Board of Regents Academic Affairs and the Executive Director support the program request. This program will serve students admitted through the Fast Track program who would benefit from additional support and career advising.

Program Description:

<u>**Catalog Description**</u>: Career Pathways provides resources and guidance to students at the beginning of their academic journey. This program allows students opportunities to explore various career options, aligns those options with the appropriate academic major, and supports students on this journey by providing them with intensive academic and career services. The goal is to help students identify the academic major that best prepares them for their future career goals and then facilitate a seamless transfer into their major of choice.

Strategic Impact –

The Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences in Career Pathways includes general education courses, student success support courses, a required certificate program, and an array of flexible electives, which together can serve as the first two years of a bachelor's degree within the SD regental system. The program can be provided in its entirety by distance to serve time- and place-bound individuals. The program meets the missions of all the South Dakota Board of Regent Universities.

BOR Strategic Impact:

The Career Pathways program aligns with SDBOR Strategic Plan Goal 2 Access and Affordability, Goal 3 Student Outcomes, and Goal 4 Workforce Development.

SDBOR Strategic Plan Goal 2 Access and Affordability pledges to increase SD high school enrollments by 5%. The Fast Track program will increase SD high school enrollments by facilitating access. Students with a high school GPA below 2.6 will be admitted to and placed into the proposed Career Pathways program through the fast-track admission program. SDBOR Strategic Plan Goal 3 Student Outcomes focuses on student success and outcomes. The program supports students with intensive academic advising while helping them determine their best-fit academic program. This stackable program will allow students to earn a certificate on their way to completing the associate degree and will allow for a seamless transition for the student from associate into the bachelor's degree program. Finally, in alignment with SDBOR Strategic Plan Goal 4 Workforce Development, the program's focus on career advising places workforce development at the forefront of a student's academic journey.

Program Summary:

The classification of this program will be 24.0102 [General Studies]. This program is proposed to be offered beginning Fall 2025 on campus at BHSU, NSU, SDSU, and USD, at the USD-SF and BHSU-RC locations, as well as online. No program accreditation is available.

All students will be required to complete 3-6 credits of first-year experience courses designed to support long-term college and career success. Additionally, students in the Career Pathways

program will be required to identify and complete a career-related academic certificate as part of their program of study. First-year experiences and collaborative assignments/projects will be the HIPs incorporated into this program.

Duplication and Competition:

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for 2022-2023 reporting shows that South Dakota produced a total of **128 undergraduate** completers in related fields.

Regental Universities[1]:

University	Associate Degrees Conferred in Related Fields	Total Number of Associate Degrees Conferred at Each Institution
BHSU, General Studies AA	16	48
DSU, General Studies AA	15	62
NSU, General Studies AA	11	29
SDM, General Studies AA	2	2
SDSU, General Studies AA	66	124
USD, General Studies AA	18	24

Private SD Universities[2]:

University	Associate Degrees Conferred in Related Fields	Total Number of Associate Degrees Conferred At Each Institution
Dakota Wesleyan, AS General Studies	2	9
Mount Marty University, AS General Studies	0	6
University of Sioux Falls, AS General Studies	0	9

Total Sum of SD Findings:

University	Total Associate Degrees in Related Fields Conferred in SD	Total Number of Associate Degrees Conferred (All SD Universities Listed Above)
Total	128	313

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[1] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for 2022-2023

[2] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for 2022-2023

Given that the existing General Studies programs are well-established and regularly used across the system, the intent behind creating the Career Pathways (AA/AS) program is to serve students who have a HS GPA below 2.6 and have been admitted through the Fast Track direct admission program. That said, the proposed program could be appropriate for any student interested in investigating career options before selecting a major.

Competitor University Peers[3]:

Given the nature of the proposed Career Pathways program, competitive peers are not relevant. However, we reviewed designs of Exploratory Studies programs from multiple institutions when considering design choices for the Career Pathways program proposed here. The institutions we consulted included:

University of Colorado, Boulder – Exploratory Studies
https://www.colorado.edu/exploratorystudies/

Purdue University – Exploratory Studies https://www.purdue.edu/exploratory/

Oregon State University, Cascades – Exploratory Studies
https://osucascades.edu/academics/university-exploratory-studies-program

University of Wyoming – Exploratory Studies https://www.uwyo.edu/uw/degree-programs/exploratory-studies.html

Workforce Outlook/State Need:

Because the proposed degree program is not tied to a specific career or occupation, reporting a specific workforce outlook is not possible. However, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics provides evidence in support of the argument that students who complete an associate degree as well as students who complete "some college, no degree" both have higher median usual weekly earnings as well as lower unemployment rates than do individuals with only a high school diploma.

https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2023/data-on-display/education-pays.htm

The data demonstrates that students who choose to leave college after completing their associates in Career Pathways, or even those who leave after completing a certificate, can expect higher earnings than those who do not attend college at all.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will systematically explore issues, objects, or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments, and break down complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

2. Students will exhibit a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Students will exhibit both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in

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[3] IPEDS, 2022-2023

original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk-taking.

3. Students will recognize and know when there is a need for information and identify, locate, evaluate and effectively and responsibly use and share that information to address the need or problem at hand.

4. Students will analyze and compare scholarly sources to develop informed conclusions or judgments.

5. Students will integrate available and reliable information to develop meaningful solutions.

6. Students will articulate the development of their academic or career goals.

Projected Enrollment:

Given the Fast Track direct admissions program is in the first year of its pilot with only three participating school districts, projecting enrollment is not possible.

The Career Pathways program is intended for students with a HS GPA below 2.6 who have been admitted to the regental system via the Fast Track program. Marketing for the Fast Track program will include information about the AA/AS in Career Pathways.

Projected Revenue/Expenses:

The proposed Career Pathways program allows students to design their own academic program, choosing courses from their intended major/career while completing general education requirements, and student success coursework.

As the Fast Track program grows to include more SD school districts, the number of students with a HS GPA below 2.6 matriculating into the regental system may increase in such a way that an institution will need to offer more sections of their student success courses. When that occurs, institutions may rely on faculty workload reassignment, the use of adjuncts (possibly from staff with student success experience and the appropriate academic credentials), or hiring instructors dedicated to supporting student success coursework.