

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Academic and Student Affairs
Consent

AGENDA ITEM: 5 – K
DATE: April 2-3, 2025

SUBJECT

Program Reactivation Request – SDSU – MS & PhD in Sociology

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

[AAC Guideline 2.3.2.5.A](#) – Placement of Programs on Inactive Status

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

South Dakota State University (SDSU) has submitted a request asking that the M.S. & PhD in sociology programs be reactivated (see Attachment I). The programs were placed on inactive status in 2020. Since that time, SDSU evaluated the curriculum and operations of both programs and assessed the need for graduates with these degrees. After this review, SDSU is prepared to move refreshed versions of these programs forward.

IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION

Any costs to reactivate the programs will be covered through an internal reallocation of resources, and SDSU does not anticipate any additional cost. SDSU will also conduct a review of current faculty utilization and capacity as these programs are reactivated.

Board staff recommends approval.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I – SDSU Program Reactivation Request

DRAFT MOTION 20250402_5-K:

I move to approve SDSU’s request to reactivate the MS and PhD in Sociology programs, as presented.



January 2, 2025

Dr. Janice Minder
SD Board of Regents
306 East Capitol Avenue, Suite 200
Pierre, SD 57501

RE: Reactivation of M.S. and Ph.D. in Sociology

Dear Dr. Minder:

On behalf of South Dakota State University (SDSU), I am writing to request the reactivation of the M.S. in Sociology (SMS.SOC) and the Ph.D. in Sociology (SPHD.SOC) programs. These programs were placed on inactive status in 2020. Since that time, SDSU evaluated the curriculum and operations of both programs and assessed the state's need for graduates with these degrees. Based on that review and analysis, and in alignment with SDSU's current strategic plan, *Pathway to Premiere 2030*, which includes achievement of R1 Carnegie Classification status, SDSU is moving this request forward for consideration. Reactivating SDSU's graduate programs in Sociology will benefit the state and region by contribution to the workforce of expertise in community social structures, relationships, and processes, with an emphasis on rural life.

Doctoral degree programs are a vital component of SDSU's academic portfolio, impacting the university's academic and research missions. Such programs provide training grounds for graduate students and a framework for important research that is guided by the faculty. SDSU currently lacks any active doctoral programs in the social sciences, an absence that inhibits SDSU's scholarly breadth and depth and its ability to impact a key sector of the state's workforce. Reactivating these programs will help address an important gap needing attention.

SDSU's decision to inactivate these programs in 2020 was driven by a lack of curricular definition resulting in declining enrollment. We are confident that refreshed versions of these programs will prove more robust by drawing on faculty with social sciences expertise across the institution, thereby providing a broader, more varied, and more sustainable base of program vitality and support.

SDSU's Ph.D. in Sociology program achieved a peak headcount enrollment of thirty-nine students in fall 2015. While SDSU expects that a reinvigorated program will eventually attract comparable enrollment, SDSU has set a more conservative near-term target of enrolling twenty-five students by fall 2030. Enrollment in the M.S. will be more modest. However, there is no additional cost to offering the M.S. alongside the Ph.D., and the master's program will provide academic flexibility as an option for students who do not desire to complete the Ph.D. program.

Reactivation of the M.S. and Ph.D. programs will entail a thorough review and judicious utilization of current faculty capacity. Any expenses will be covered through an internal reallocation of resources, and therefore, SDSU does not anticipate any additional cost to reactivate these programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. D. Hedge'.

Dennis D. Hedge, Pharm.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs