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Regents' initiative is well-timed win for state

Efforts wise to retain nontraditional students to help them complete degrees

New efforts by the South Dakota Board of Regents to boost the number of nontraditional students in the state university system hardly could come at a better time.

When the economy turns down, people often take advantage of that time to further their education. But it stands to reason that just as many students might leave school early because of the economy.

In fact, 2,700 students with 90 or more credits - those who have finished the equivalent of their junior year - quit school in the past five years, Regents staff member Paul Turman says.

Only 228 of those students have completed their degrees elsewhere since.

It's smart of the Regents to target precisely those students, called ready learners.

Some ideas to help them complete their degrees also are clever, such as waiving minor restriction holds on registering for classes that were placed on their records for infractions such as failing to return library books or pay parking fees.

Adding scholarships for nontraditional students, easing credit transfers and adapting the school calendar to fit adult learners' schedules are other ideas that not only will aid ready learners but also other adults returning to school or beginning their college education for the first time.

That the Regents are able to participate this initiative, which is a multistate effort, without tapping South Dakota's limited budget is a bonus.

The grant-funded project is a win for the state all around.

Additional Facts

The facts

- The state Board of Regents is participating in a project called Non- Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners.
 - The multistate project is sponsored by the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.
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