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NDSCS TO RECEIVE TITLE III GRANT RENEWABLE UP TO \$1.8 MILLION

WAHPETON — The North Dakota State College of Science has been awarded a Title III grant from the United States Department of Education that could bring \$1.825 million in federal funds to the Wahpeton campus over the next five years.

The college received notification of the initial award Tuesday in materials sent by Hubert Davis, director of the Institutional Development and Undergraduate Education Service. The office of U.S. Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) last week gave NDSCS officials an early notice of the award, based on a letter sent to Conrad by Assistant Secretary of Education Karen A. Johnson.

The initial grant is \$365,000 for a one-year period beginning Oct. 1, 2004, and the Department of Education anticipates the grant will be for a total of five years, according to the letters and the grant material, bringing the five-year total to \$1.825 million.

Dr. Sharon Hart, president of NDSCS, made the announcement on campus this morning.

“This Title III grant is terrific news for NDSCS,” Hart said. “The \$1.825 million award from the Department of Education validates our efforts in Washington, D.C., over the past year and shows the tremendous support for higher education from our congressional delegation.”

Conrad, in a letter to NDSCS officials, said the funding will have a positive impact on prospective college students throughout North Dakota.

“Access to higher education and workforce training are vital to North Dakota,” Conrad wrote in his congratulatory letter. “This grant will undoubtedly encourage more students from across our state to take advantage of the outstanding programs available to them at NDSCS.”

NDSCS applied for funding under the Department of Education’s Strengthening Institutions Program during the previous academic year. The program awards development grants to help colleges and universities strengthen academic quality, management capabilities or fiscal stability.

The NDSCS project — titled “Increasing Access to Unique and High-Cost Programs Across a Remote Geographical Service Area” — is designed to make five academic options available through distance education delivery methods such as off-site instruction, Internet-based classes and interactive video networks.

The Department of Education funded only 53 proposals from among 260 eligible applications. Three reviewers gave the NDSCS submission scores of 100, the highest possible score. The cut-off score for funding was 96, according to the Davis letter.

According to its proposal, NDSCS will develop programs for older-than-average and other non-traditional students in North Dakota and the Upper Midwest. These students generally are place-bound due to work or family obligations. They tend to be people who are age 25 or older and looking for opportunities to change careers or to develop new skills in a chosen field.

“Hundreds of talented people live in the rural areas of North Dakota and neighboring states, and they are proud to call these small towns their homes,” Hart said. “Many of them need educational opportunities to realize their dreams, but they are unable to attend college in the traditional on-campus model. This grant allows NDSCS to enhance its ability to serve them, regardless of location, through unique delivery methods.”

Hart also pointed to the grant as one more example of how NDSCS fulfills the state’s vision for the future through the Roundtable on Higher Education developed by the Legislature. The Roundtable makes higher education the “vital link” for the state’s economic revitalization.

“The Roundtable challenges the state’s colleges and universities to focus on six cornerstones to build a stronger North Dakota for the future. One of those cornerstones is accessibility, and this grant will enable NDSCS to reach new populations with dynamic academic programs.”

Under the proposal, NDSCS will develop five academic options for distance delivery by adding new programs or revising curriculum in existing programs. The first of these — Architectural Drafting and Estimating Technology — took the initial steps toward an Internet-based curriculum with two online pilot classes this summer. College officials believe it is the nation’s first associate in applied science degree in Architectural Drafting and Estimating Technology available entirely online.

The other four programs are expected to come from a group under review that includes information technology, manufacturing and health-related curriculums, according to Harvey Link, assistant to the president for governmental relations. The college also is working with the

Center for Nanoscale Science and Engineering, located in the Research and Technology Park at North Dakota State University, to identify technical needs for future employees. This potential alliance supports the Red River Valley Research Corridor, a concept developed and promoted by U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.). The Research Corridor already has attracted high-tech companies choosing to locate in North Dakota. Many of these companies will require workers in new or emerging technical areas, and NDSCS has a responsibility to provide educational programs to help meet these needs, Link said.

NDSCS will apply the funding toward faculty training, curriculum development, additional staff to run the grant program, new computer equipment and program evaluation. Bob Gette, who retired two years ago after serving NDSCS as vice president for instruction, served as a consultant to the college last year and wrote the proposal submitted to the Department of Education.

NDSCS is a two-year, comprehensive, residential college in Wahpeton. The State College of Science offers degrees, certificates and diplomas in over 80 academic options in traditional career and technical studies and in the liberal arts. Approximately 97 percent of graduates from its technical programs find jobs in their chosen fields.

Unlike most two-year colleges, NDSCS offers a university atmosphere for its students, complete with residence halls, 35 affiliated clubs and organizations, music groups, theater productions, intercollegiate athletics, intramural athletics and numerous social activities.

NDSCS celebrated its centennial last year. The college opened in 1903 as the North Dakota Academy of Science.

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