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**In Wednesday Meeting, Board Reports 78% Retention Rate,  
Approves New Respiratory Therapy Program  
and Expansion of Medical Assistant Program to Huron**

PIERRE, S.D. – During a meeting of the Board of Technical Education on Wednesday morning, the state’s technical college system announced a 78% retention rate for the fall of 2020. The system has maintained this retention rate over the past five years. The retention rate measures students who were enrolled at an institution one fall and either continue their enrollment or have graduated by the following fall.

Lake Area Technical College in Watertown reported an 84% retention rate, Mitchell Technical College in Mitchell reported an 82% rate, Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls reported a 75% rate, and Western Dakota Technical College in Rapid City reported a 69% rate.

“South Dakota’s technical college system is among the finest in the nation,” said Dana Dykhouse, chair of the Board of Technical Education. “Today’s report on fall retention reaffirms the outstanding work happening throughout the system and the ability of our technical colleges to meet the needs of students in an extraordinary time.”

The board approved a new Associate of Applied Science degree in Respiratory Therapy at Southeast Technical College. The new program is being built in partnership with the state’s leading healthcare systems and is designed to meet high demand in the field of Respiratory Therapy. The demand existed prior to the emergence of COVID-19 and has only increased in recent months.

“This program will help meet a growing need in the field of Respiratory Therapy in South Dakota,” noted board member Diana Vanderwoude, who also serves as the Senior Executive Director of Leadership, Education, and Development for Sanford Health.

Wednesday’s meeting also featured the approval of the expansion of Southeast Technical College’s Medical Assistant diploma program to Huron. The program expansion represents a continued partnership between Huron Regional Medical Center and Southeast Technical College.