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### **Retention rate strong at state technical institutes; new programs added**

PIERRE, S.D. – The retention rate at South Dakota’s four technical institutes is 78 percent, an all-time high. Since 2012, the retention rate has increased four percent. The state Board of Technical Education heard a report on the retention rates at its meeting earlier today.

“Students and staff at our state’s technical institutes should be proud of this retention rate,” said Nick Wendell, executive director of the Board of Technical Education. “The students behind these numbers represent a growing workforce, trained with the skills and credentials South Dakota employers need.”

Southeast Technical Institute received board approval of a one-year veterinary assistant diploma and a two-year associate of applied science veterinary technician degree starting in fall 2018. Veterinary assistants help in evaluation and treatment of basic health, injuries and/or illness of large and small animals. They also provide office support and customer service, typically working in animal hospitals, clinics or other animal facilities. In addition to the duties of veterinary assistants, veterinary technicians can perform medical tests under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian to assist in diagnosing animal injuries and illnesses. They can also provide support to biomedical researchers and other scientists. Veterinary technicians can work in agricultural production settings, labs, research facilities, animal hospitals and clinics.

The board also approved an expansion of Lake Area Technical Institute’s agricultural aviation program into a standalone associate of applied science aviation program with three options: agricultural aviation, professional helicopter pilot and professional fixed-wing pilot. The expanded offerings would be available beginning in summer 2018. The new degree options are designed for students interested in a career in the commercial pilot industry.