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Technical Institutes Name Change Legislation to be Introduced

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Technical Education is endorsing legislation designed to change the names of the state’s four technical institutes to technical colleges. The proposed legislation will be sponsored by Representative Hugh Bartels (R-Watertown) and Senator Jim White (R-Huron).

The name change legislation will not change the mission of the institutions. Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown), Mitchell Technical Institute (Mitchell), Southeast Technical Institute (Sioux Falls), and Western Dakota Technical Institute (Rapid City) will continue to focus on workforce development and grant two-year Associate of Applied Science degrees.

By referring to the four schools as technical colleges, South Dakota will align with the overwhelming majority of other states across the nation.

“When the Aspen Institute named Lake Area Tech the nation’s best two-year college in 2017, this is the language they used. Institute is an antiquated term in post-secondary education,” noted one of the bill’s sponsors, Representative Hugh Bartels. “I want to ensure that the way we refer to our technical schools reflects the caliber of their programs, faculty, and graduates.”

A central mission of the Board of Technical Education is to change the public perception of technical education in South Dakota.

“South Dakota is home to one of the very best technical education systems in the nation,” said Board Chairman Dana Dykhouse. “This legislation reaffirms for students and families that the four technical schools in our state offer a high-quality college education that leads to high-paying careers.”