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More graduates attend college

Report: Fewer get degrees in 4 years

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The percentage of high school graduates in the Sioux Falls School District who immediately go on to college reached 68 percent in 2008, a high over the five years that number has been tracked.

But far fewer leave college with degrees, and for those who do it often takes more than four years.

Only 29 percent of those in the 2004 high school class had earned a college degree within four years of graduating high school.

Of the 2001 class, only 23 percent earned a degree in four years, but 44 percent had earned degrees within seven years of completing high school.

The figures come from an annual "Successful Outcomes" report the school district gets from the National Student Clearinghouse, which has access to the enrollment and graduation records of 92 percent of the nation's post-secondary students. The district orders the report with an eye toward increasing its rates of college participation and completion.

After hearing the report at Monday's meeting, board member Debbie Hoffman said the fact that only 44 percent of 2001 high school graduates have college degrees by now should concern the community.

Doug Morrison said he'd like to see less data and more explanations for why students struggle at the next level.

"It's very hard for us to know how to change things in a sense," he said.

While disappointing to some, the latest college graduation rates were about the same as the national average as reported by the ACT Institutional Data File.

Of 2003 Sioux Falls high school graduates who enrolled at two-year post-secondary schools, 34 percent had graduated within three years, compared with 32 percent nationally.

The five-year graduation rate for four-year schools was the same nationally and in Sioux Falls at 52 percent.

Monday's report also showed where Sioux Falls students first enroll after high school.

South Dakota schools were twice as popular as out-of-state schools among 2008 graduates. The top five choices in order were South Dakota State University, the University of South Dakota, Southeast Tech, Augustana College and the University of Sioux Falls.

Board members noted the report did not include the number of students who join the military.
