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Retention remains high at state technical institutes; MTI adds options

PIERRE, S.D. – Retention at South Dakota’s four technical institutes is 77 percent. This is an all-time high and continues a five-year trend of growing retention rates. The South Dakota Board of Education heard a report on technical institute retention rates at its meeting earlier today.

“It takes hard work and commitment from both students and technical institute staff to ensure students persevere to graduation. Our state’s continued excellent retention rate is a cause for celebration, as it means students are learning skills and earning credentials for success in the workplace,” says Tiffany Sanderson, director of career and technical education for the South Dakota Department of Education.

Mitchell Technical Institute received board approval to offer a diploma in Licensed Practical Nursing. This one-year program will prepare students to fill an immediate need in the workforce and may also serve as a pathway to other medical careers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the projected job growth for LPNs is 25 percent nationally, and 11.5 percent in South Dakota, according to the South Dakota Labor Market Information Center.

The board also approved an expansion of MTI’s Precision Technology Specialist program. This expansion adds a GPS/GIS Mapping Technology diploma option to help meet a growing need for a skilled workforce trained in the precision technologies of GPS, GIS, geospatial mapping and data management. In addition, the board approved changing the name of the Precision Technology Specialist program to Precision Agriculture Technician to better reflect the ag-oriented curriculum and jobs for which this degree prepares its students.