SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS
New Site Request

UNIVERSITY:	**SDSU**
DEGREE(S) AND PROGRAM:	**Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization**
NEW SITE(S): *Include address of new physical locations.* *Delivery methods are defined in AAC Guideline 2.4.3.B.*	**SDSU West River Research and Extension** **711 N Creek Dr.** **Rapid City, SD 57703**
INTENDED DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:	**Summer 2026**
CIP CODE:	**26.0101 – Major CIP** **26.0308 – Specialization CIP**
UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT:	**Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science**
BANNER DEPARTMENT CODE:	**SAHP**
UNIVERSITY DIVISION:	**College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences**
BANNER DIVISION CODE:	**3F**

☒ **Please check this box to confirm that:**

- The individual preparing this request has read AAC Guideline 2.3.2.4.A, which pertains to new site requests, and that this request meets the requirements outlined in the guidelines.
- This request will not be posted to the university website for review of the Academic Affairs Committee until it is approved by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

University Approval

To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this proposal, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.

Barry H Dunn

President of the University — 5.13.2026 Date

Note: In the responses below, references to external sources, including data sources, should be documented with a footnote (including web addresses where applicable).

1. **What is the need for offering the program at the new physical site or through distance delivery?**

   South Dakota State University (SDSU) requests authorization to offer the existing Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization at the West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City. This request is driven by projected growth in employment opportunities, the unique research capacity of the West River Research Farm and Cottonwood Field Station, and the strong existing expertise at these facilities, which serve stakeholders and producers across western South Dakota.

   The Biological Sciences Ph.D. with the Plant Molecular Biology Specialization program provides students with opportunities to conduct original research across a broad range of

disciplines within plant and agricultural sciences, including crop production, entomology, horticulture, plant biotechnology, plant breeding, plant pathology, precision farming, soils, water management and weed science. In addition, the program equips students with critical skills in experimental design, data analytics, scientific communication, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring they are prepared to address contemporary agricultural challenges.

Both the West River Research Farm and Cottonwood Field Station currently support active research programs across several of these disciplines, with a strong emphasis on regionally relevant production systems. These facilities provide an established platform for conducting graduate research with both regional and national impact.

Employment projections from the Food, Agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources, and the Environment (FARNRE) workforce outlook for 2025–2030 indicate strong demand, with plant, horticulture, and agronomy fields accounting for approximately 15% of science and engineering-related positions. Additionally, the Great Plains region is expected to account for approximately 14% of FARNRE employment opportunities, further underscoring the need for trained professionals in this area.[1]

Offering the Biological Sciences Ph.D. with Plant Molecular Biology Specialization at this new location will enhance the utilization of existing research infrastructure, expand access to graduate education in western South Dakota, and strengthen research outputs in alignment with SDSU's Pathway to Premier 2030 strategic plan.

The University does not request new state resources or new student fees to support delivery at West River Research and Extension Center.

2. **Are any other Regental universities authorized to offer a similar program at the proposed site(s) or through distance delivery? If "yes," identify the institutions and programs and explain why authorization is requested.**

   No other Regental universities offer a similar program at this site.

3. **Are students enrolling in the program expected to be new to the university or redirected from other existing programs at the university? Complete the table below and explain the methodology used in developing the estimates.**

   Students enrolling in the program are expected to be new to the university. Enrollment projections are based on the number of students currently advised by faculty in Rapid City and anticipated time to completion.

	1st	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**
Estimates	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
Students new to the university	1	1	1	1
Existing students from other university programs	0	0	0	0
=Total students in the program at the site	1	2	3	2
Program credit hours (major courses)**	15	30	45	30
Graduates	0	0	0	1

[1] Reference: Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment United States, 2025-2030 https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/

4. What is the perceived impact of this request on existing programs in the Regental system?

No negative impact on existing programs within the Regental system is anticipated. Rather, the program will complement existing offerings by enhancing regionally focused research capacity in western South Dakota while contributing to broader statewide agricultural research and workforce needs.

5. Complete the table and explain any special circumstances. Attach a copy of the program as it appears in the current catalog. If there are corresponding program modifications requested, please attach the associated form. Explain the delivery of the new courses and attach any associated new course request forms.

Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization - 60 Credit Plan	Credit hours	Credit hours currently available from this university at this site	Credit hours currently available from other universities available at this site	Credit hours currently available online	Credit hours new to this university
Core Requirements	5	0	0	5	0
Dissertation	30	30	0	0	0
Electives	25	0	0	25	0
Total, Degree with Proposed Major	60	30	0	0	0

Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization - 90 Credit Plan	Credit hours	Credit hours currently available from this university at this site	Credit hours currently available from other universities available at this site	Credit hours currently available via distance	Credit hours new to this university
Core Requirements	5	0	0	5	0
Dissertation	40	40	0	0	0
Electives	45	0	0	45	0
Total, Degree with Proposed Major	90	40	0	50	0

All courses in the curriculum are offered on the SDSU main campus in Brookings and/or online and will be delivered to students at the SDSU West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City via distance technology. Dissertation advising will be at the Rapid City site along with research conducted West River.

Requirements of the Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization

- XXX 790 or 890 - Seminar Credits: 1 - Selected with advisory committee approval
- GSR 601- Research Regulations Compliance Credits: 1
- Minimum of 3 credits of STAT numbered 500-level or higher
- PS 898D Dissertation Credits: 30-40
- Electives as needed to reach 60 or 90 credits

6. How will the university provide student services comparable to those available for students on the main campus?

Graduate students enrolled in the Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) - Plant Molecular Biology Specialization program at Rapid City will have access to comprehensive academic and support services throughout their program. Students will work closely with an academic advisor based either on the main campus or at the West River Research and Extension Center. The graduate student committee will connect via email, phone, or Zoom meetings.

In addition, students will have access to support staff and services provided through Continuing and Distance Education (CDE) at SDSU, as well as on-site assistance at the West River Research and Extension Center. SDSU's Continuing and Distance Education office employs enrollment and student success coordinators who are available to assist online and distance students in connecting to necessary resources online and on campus. SDSU has also launched within the learning management system a virtual student union in which all online and distance students have access providing them with easy connections to various academic success and student support resources. These include, but are not limited to, online tutoring support through Tutor.com, student success videos, disability services accommodations (upon student request), career services, and online library services.

The South Dakota State University Hilton M. Briggs Library has a long history of supporting students engaged in coursework away from the main campus, including those at off-campus centers and in online programs. Library support services will be available through multiple modalities:

- Students may contact librarians for research assistance, access online research guides, and schedule consultations with library faculty.
- Distance Library Services provide book and article delivery for materials owned by the library, and students may request additional resources through interlibrary loan.
- SDSU students have online access to major research databases, including Web of Science, EBSCOhost MegaFILE, and JSTOR.

Students will also have access to technical support services provided by SDSU's Information Technology Services, as well as on-site technical assistance when needed.

7. Is this program accredited by a specialized accrediting body? If so, address any program accreditation issues and costs related to offering the program at the new site(s).

There is not an accreditation available for this discipline.

8. Does the university request any exceptions to Board policy for delivery at the new site(s)? Explain requests for exceptions to Board policy.

None.

9. Cost, Budget, and Resources related to new courses at the site: Explain the amount and source(s) of any one-time and continuing investments in personnel, professional development, release time, time redirected from other assignments, instructional technology & software, other operations and maintenance, facilities, etc., needed to implement the proposed minor.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science do not request new state resources or new student fees to support delivery of the program in Rapid City.

Several Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science (AHPS) faculty members are currently stationed at the West River Research and Extension facility in Rapid City. They regularly teach courses, conduct research, and participate in outreach activities to West River stakeholders. Students in this program will enroll in distance courses and conduct on-site field-based research projects in collaboration with the AHPS faculty members. The West River Research and Extension facility as well as the faculty assigned there are funded by a combination of general funds, SDSU Agricultural Experiment Station research funds, or SDSU Extension funds.