



DAKOTA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

1200 W. University Ave., Mitchell, SD 57301-4398

PHONE: 605-995-2620 **FAX:** 605-995-2723 **WEB:** www.dwu.edu
Lori Essig, Vice President for University Relations, 605-995-2614

NEWS

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Contact: Dr. Donald Simmons
(605) 929-4176

Dakota Wesleyan University Poll: South Dakotans Give Quality of Life High Marks

MITCHELL—South Dakotans are much more satisfied with their quality of life than most Americans, according to researchers at Dakota Wesleyan University.

“Our statewide poll indicated that approximately 85 percent of respondents rate the quality of life for South Dakotans good or excellent,” said Donald Simmons, director of the McGovern Center for Leadership and Public Service at DWU. “When compared to similar nationwide polls conducted by other organizations during the past year indicating that only about half of Americans feel life is good or excellent, the DWU poll shows South Dakotans are fairly content.”

The statewide poll of 410 adult South Dakotans conducted between March 18 and 29, asked residents how they would rate the quality of life for South Dakotans today. The majority of respondents, 53 percent, rated life good; 32 percent, excellent; 11 percent, fair; and 3 percent, poor. One percent either did not respond or said they did not know. A national poll conducted by Opinion Dynamics for FOX News in 2006 found that only 52 percent of Americans rated quality of life good or excellent, down from 75 percent in 2004.

Income played an important role in how life in the state was perceived by those surveyed. More than one-half (52 percent) of individuals with incomes of more than \$100,000 said life in South Dakota was excellent, compared to 22 percent of those with incomes of \$20,000 or less.

Student coordinators of the poll were Katrina Jarding, junior public service and leadership major from Alexandria, and Brock Seim, senior math major from Le Grand, Iowa.

“There is definitely a connection between income and how one views their quality of life,” said Jarding. “It may be that the poor are often frustrated by their inability to find quality, affordable housing, childcare and healthcare.”

Republicans responding to the poll rated quality of life better than Democrats, with 39 percent rating life in the state excellent, compared to 28 percent of Democrats. Only 61 percent of Native Americans said life in South Dakota was excellent or good, compared to 87 percent of Caucasians. However, Native Americans still rated quality of life in South Dakota higher than the average respondent in the most recent national poll conducted by Opinion Dynamics.

“Many South Dakota communities have received national recognition and high praise in recent years for being family friendly and great places to live,” said Simmons. “The results only confirmed what many South Dakotans already know.”

The poll was a joint project of the faculty of the McGovern Center for Leadership and Public Service and the Department of Mathematics at Dakota Wesleyan University. More detailed information about the poll results are available online at www.mcgoverncenter.com.

Additional poll results will be released by Dakota Wesleyan University in coming weeks.