

Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related full proposal request for a new program. The Executive Director and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer through the proper process. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director, System Academic Officer or designee. This form is meant to capture critical elements for stakeholders to review prior to a full proposal.

University NSU - Northern State University

Degree AS : Associate of Science

Name of Major X999 : New Major Requested

Respiratory Therapy

No

Specialization Required?

Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.

College/Department 5A : NSU College of Arts & Sciences/NNUR : Nursing

Intended Date of Full Proposal Spring 2026

Planned CIP Code 51.0908

Program Description

1. Provide the working program description that may appear in the university catalog.

The Associate of Science (AS) in Respiratory Therapy prepares students for careers as respiratory care practitioners who assess, treat, and manage patients with breathing and cardiopulmonary conditions. The program combines strong academic preparation in the biological and physical sciences with hands-on clinical experience in hospital and healthcare settings.

Students learn to perform diagnostic tests, manage life-support equipment, provide oxygen therapy and other respiratory treatments, administer medications, and assist with critical care procedures under the supervision of licensed respiratory therapists and physicians. The curriculum emphasizes patient-centered care, ethical practice, sound clinical judgment, and effective communication as essential elements of professional success.

Graduates are eligible to take the national credentialing examinations offered by the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) and may apply for state licensure as Registered Respiratory Therapists (RRTs). As a comprehensive regional university, we prepare graduates to meet workforce needs across the region with the knowledge, skill, and professionalism essential to high-quality respiratory care.

Strategic Impact

2. Describe how the program fits in with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities.

Mission Alignment:

Northern State University's mission is to provide diverse academic, civic, social, and cultural opportunities that prepare students through the liberal arts, professional education, and E-learning for their future endeavors, while also enriching the local and regional community. The Associate of Science (AS) in Respiratory Therapy supports this mission by preparing students for meaningful, in-demand careers in healthcare that directly serve the needs of our region. Through classroom learning and clinical experience, students develop the knowledge, skills, and professionalism needed to provide quality care and improve patient outcomes across our communities.

Strategic Plan and Academic Priorities:

This program aligns with Northern's strategic priorities to expand academic offerings in high-demand, workforce-centered fields. Respiratory therapy continues to be a growing healthcare specialty with opportunities in neonatal and pediatric care, geriatrics, pulmonary rehabilitation, critical care, home care, sleep studies, and pulmonary diagnostics. The program's focus on applied learning, professional readiness, and community impact reflects Northern's broader commitment to preparing graduates for successful, service-oriented careers.

Program Array:

The AS in Respiratory Therapy complements Northern's existing programs in nursing and the health sciences by expanding interdisciplinary opportunities and supporting dual-credential pathways. For example, nursing students may also choose to complete the respiratory therapy degree to enhance their professional qualifications and career flexibility. In this way, the program strengthens Northern's overall academic portfolio while addressing critical workforce needs in the region.

If the program does not align to the strategic plan, provide a compelling rationale for the institution to offer the program.

N/A

3. How does the program connect to the Board of Regent's Strategic Plan?

Providing an Associate of Science degree in Respiratory Therapy helps fulfill Goals 2 to 5 in the Board of Regents Strategic Plan.

Goal 2: A two-year degree that minimizes time and cost to students makes college education affordable and lays a foundation for access to further education. A compelling strategy to address access and affordability.

Goal 3: A two-year program that leans into certificates and other Board of Regents credentialing efforts creates an attainable, stackable educational journey. This ensures students are successful in completing their degree(s).

Goal 4: Creating a two-year program that addresses a workforce need helps ensure the Board of Regents is responsive to the demands of the health care field and facilitate economic viability of industry partners.

Goal 5: A two-year program in a critical need area where few programs exist helps the Board of Regents be efficient and effective in providing educational services to students. This helps improve financial health of the system and ensure viability of all six state universities.

Program Summary

4. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

This question refers to the type of degree, not the program. For example, if your university has authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science and the program requested is a Bachelor of Science, then the request is not for a new degree.

N/A

5. What modality/modalities will be used to offer the new program?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date
On Campus	Yes	Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off Campus Location	Yes	Clinical Sites – Clinics & Hospitals	Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Delivery Method(s)	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery	Yes		Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Identify Institutions
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	Yes	South Dakota State University

6. If the program will be offered through distance delivery, identify the planned instructional modality:

Both / HyFlex

Academic Quality

7. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program? Include links to at least 3 comparable programs at peer institutions and links to national or accreditation standards, if any.

South Dakota State University (regental) – South Dakota State University has a respiratory care program that offers both an associate and a bachelor’s degree. Provided is the link to the A.S. in Respiratory Care, which will be used as a foundation to create an associate program at Northern. [1]

Lake Superior College (non-peer) – Lake Superior College has an Associate of Applied Science Respiratory Therapy program. This program will also serve as a foundation for the creation of Northern’s Associate of Science in Respiratory Therapy. [2]

CoARC - Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care Standards, fees, resources, and information related to Respiratory Therapy will be followed according to guidelines and information available on the CoARC website. [3]

[1] <https://www.sdstate.edu/programs/undergraduate/respiratory-care>.

[2] <https://www.lsc.edu/degrees/respiratory-therapy-aas/>.

[3] <https://coarc.com/>.

8. What program accreditation is available, if any?

Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) accredits entry-into-practice respiratory care programs, ensuring they meet standards required for: graduate eligibility for NBRC credentialing (CRT / RRT), state licensure as a Respiratory Therapist, federal financial aid (Title IV), and institutional and workforce credibility.

Note: If a program is not CoARC-accredited, graduates are typically not eligible for the NBRC exams — which is a nonstarter for licensure.

9. Will the proposed program pursue accreditation or certifications?

Yes

If no, why has the department elected not to pursue accreditation for the program?

N/A

Duplication and Competition

10. Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?

*A list of existing programs is available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, indicate **none**.*

Yes

A. If yes, defend the need for an additional program within the state, Include IPEDS enrollment data and additional data as needed.

SDSU graduated 7 students with the AS degree in respiratory therapy in the most recent report from IPEDS. Conversations with workforce development leaders and human resources recruiters at Avera, Sanford, and Monument Health all reported unfilled positions and the need for more respiratory therapy graduates.

B. If yes, would this program be a candidate for Regental system collaboration?

Possibly. Clinicals need to take place in Aberdeen and northeastern South Dakota.

11. Do any related programs exist at any non-Regental college or university within 150 miles of the university?

List those programs here:

No. University of Jamestown does not offer this degree.

A. If yes, use IPEDS to identify the enrollment in those programs.

N/A

B. What evidence suggests there is unmet student demand for the proposed program, or that the proposed program would attract students away from the existing program?

N/A

Market Demand

This section establishes the market demand for the proposed program (eg Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need). Use the following sources for your data:

- [South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation](#)
- [O-Net](#)
- [US Department of Labor Projections Central](#)
- SDBOR Workforce and Degree Gap Analysis Report

12. What is the expected growth of the industry or occupation in South Dakota and nationally?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

Approximately, 255 jobs are expected in 2026 in South Dakota, 26% below the national average. However, Respiratory Therapy jobs are expected to grow 12.2% in South Dakota, with a 10% growth on the national level, from 2026-2035.[4]

[4] LightCast

13. What evidence, if any, suggests there are unfilled openings in South Dakota or nationally?

In December 2025 2025, there were 35 unique postings - Sanford and Avera were the top companies posting positions. [5]

[5] LightCast

14. What salaries can program graduates expect to earn in South Dakota and nationally?

The median earnings is \$59,700/year for South Dakota. Nationally, the median is \$64,000. [6]

[6] LightCast

15. Optional: Provide any additional evidence of regional demand for the program.

e.g. prospective student interest survey data, letters of support from employers, community needs...

Northern leaders had conversations with Monument Health, Sanford Health, and Avera Health regarding need in Respiratory Therapists. All facilities said there was need with minimal educational opportunities for students. Each supported Northern State University's efforts to create an associate degree to meet the demands, suggesting their facility as a clinical site.

Student Demand

16. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.

Choose programs not already listed in question 11. Use the most recent year available.

University Name	State	Program Name	Number of Degrees Conferred in Program	Total Number of Conferrals at Level (Undergrad or Grad)
South Dakota State University	SD : South Dakota	Respiratory Therapy	7	105
Lake Superior College	MN : Minnesota	Respiratory Therapy	11	594
Fort Hayes State College	KS : Kansas	Respiratory Therapy	6	122

17. What evidence suggests there is interest from prospective students for this program at the university?

With the exponential growth in nursing, up to 105 pre-nursing and nursing students in a matter of 1.5 years, there is a need to continue to support additional pathways for students pursuing something in the health care field. Educational pathways, like Respiratory Therapy, provide an opportunity to students in case nursing is not feasible based on time, money, or academic excellence for students. Respiratory Therapy provides a workforce demand education to students who want to minimize cost yet obtain a degree in an area of critical need.

Enrollment

18. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from existing programs at the university?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

We expect both new and redirected students. Approximately, one to two students will be existing students at Northern State University, while 90% of the students will be new to the university.

19. Narrative Description of the preliminary estimates on annual enrollment in this program by year six

Include all students within the program, not just those new to the program.

Following accreditation guidelines, student clinical training must follow an eight or less student to respiratory staff ratio. Time and clinical staffing limit the number of students accepted into the program each year. The recommended program size is 24 students per cohort. Using this as a model and keeping to a managing level, we expect to accept 16 students per cohort, with 32 students in the program at any given time, then graduating 16 students each year. These values are expected by the second accepting class of students.