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Argus Leader

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DOC reports 3 inmate deaths at penitentiary

TJ Rhodes

Sioux Falls Argus Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

The South Dakota Department of Corrections announced the deaths of three inmates at the South Dakota State Penitentiary between July 23 and Aug. 26.

Jose Sanchez, 61, died on July 22; his death was announced the next day.

Benny Laible, 66, and Chico Baker, 25, died under state custody Tuesday, Aug. 25, with Laible's death announced the same day and Baker's death announced Aug. 26.

DOC spokesman Michael Winder confirmed that these deaths are not related. The manner of each death has not been released.

Sanchez was serving a sentence for attempted first-degree murder and sim-

ple assault on law enforcement out of Minnehaha County. Sanchez was housed at the Jameson Prison Annex, a top security wing of the penitentiary.

Laible was serving a life sentence for second-degree murder out of Miner County. He was also being held at the Jameson Prison Annex.

Baker was serving a sentence for reckless burning – aiding and abetting – out of Lincoln County. He was housed at

the penitentiary.

South Dakota Attorney General's Office spokesman Tony Mangan confirmed that the Department of Criminal Investigations has not requested to investigate any of these deaths.

However, DOC documents note that all inmate deaths are investigated by a medical examiner who does not work

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Augustana University students walk past the new Foundation Heights apartment building on Aug. 26 at Augustana University. PHOTOS BY MORGAN MATZEN/ARGUS LEADER

Newest Augustana housing honors trustee's legacy

Residence hall named for longtime supporter who helped shape Augustana and Sioux Falls

Morgan Matzen

Sioux Falls Argus Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

On the first day of fall classes at Augustana University, the newest student housing option, Foundation Heights, was already at full capacity with more than 100 students as university leaders cut the ribbon on the apartment complex Wednesday, Aug. 26.

The four-story building at the corner of 28th Street and Grange Avenue has been in the works since at least 2023, when it was mentioned in a planning commission meeting. AU leaders broke ground on the \$12 million apartment in April 2025, and the building was completed in time for upper class student move-in day Sunday, Aug. 23.

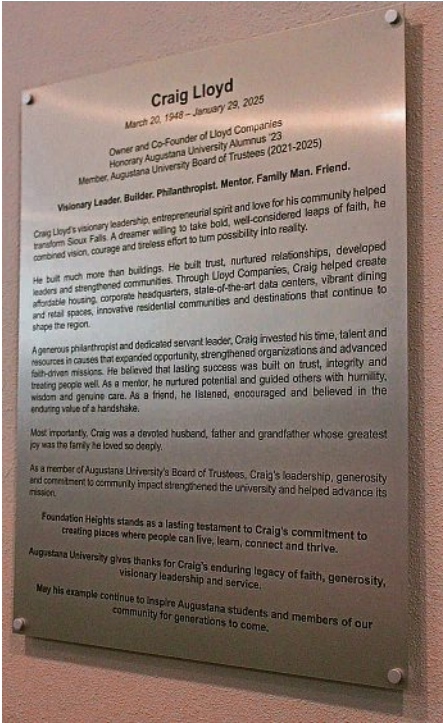
"Whenever we have students return, there's a special kind of energy and excitement when campus fills for the new semester," AU President Stephanie Hersheth Sandlin said. "Students are reconnecting with one another; faculty are

preparing, welcoming them back into the classrooms (and) the labs – our newest Vikings are discovering the joy of life at AU and life in Sioux Falls."

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The exterior of the Foundation Heights apartment building on Aug. 26 at Augustana University.



A plaque inside Foundation Heights remembers Craig Lloyd as a visionary leader, builder, philanthropist, mentor, family man and friend on Aug. 26 at Augustana University.

South Dakota earns No. 1 work ethic ranking

Angela George

Sioux Falls Argus Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

From "Midwest Nice" to "Midwest Grind," South Dakotans have been named the hardest working employees in the country.

According to financier website WalletHub, compared with all 50 states, ours has the highest employment rate, the most side hustles and a shorter workday commute than most.

The site's report, released Wednesday, Aug. 26, says South Dakota was measured, in part, by its 98% employment rate, its 6.5% of workers with multiple jobs, its fifth-lowest average workweek and its fifth-lowest average leisure time per day.

South Dakota also has the fifth-lowest share of "idle youth," or people ages 18 to 24 who are not in school and not working, the report says, noting that "young adults are actively trying to advance their education or career paths."

"South Dakotans aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves and get to work, and now there is a ranking to prove it," Gov. Larry Rhoden said Wednesday. "That's a testament to the farmers, ranchers, small business owners, workers and families who put in the work every day to make our state the best place to live, work and raise a family."

Why being the hardest-working state may not be a good thing

According to the South Dakota Department of Labor, there are about 488,000 workers in the state – the most popular fields of which are healthcare, agriculture, skilled trades and nursing – equaling a 2% unemployment rate (around 9,700 people), compared to the nation's 4% unemployment rate.

But David Chicoine, former president of South Dakota State University in Brookings, told NewsWatch in 2024 that a 2% unemployment rate can also mean the state doesn't have enough workers to take advantage of new opportunities and sustain growth.

The report noted that the ranking "may not be an ideal situation," indicating jobs are not paying enough, but that it's still "a testament" to how hard South Dakotans are "willing to work."

"It's undeniable that America has fostered a culture of hard work, with people working longer hours than residents of other developed countries and often leaving vacation time on the

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