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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Corporation Vote Determines to Close Freeman Academy
Following 2025/26 School Year**

FREEMAN, South Dakota – The Freeman Junior College/Freeman Academy Corporation voted during a special meeting on Saturday, January 31, to close Freeman Academy school operations at the conclusion of the 2025/26 school year. The final vote tally was 1,702 in favor of the motion to 956 against it; a simple majority was needed to pass the motion per Corporation bylaws.

The emotional decision was made in light of declining enrollment over the past two decades, coupled with financial and operational challenges that called the long-term sustainability of the school into question. It also followed a deliberate process that spanned close to a year and a half, which included multiple town hall meetings, forums and the work of a task force appointed by the Freeman Academy Board of Directors.

The private Christian school was founded on Anabaptist principles and began serving students in 1903 as South Dakota Mennonite College; it later became known as Freeman Junior College and added Freeman Academy to serve high school students. FJC closed operations after the 1985-86 school year. The institution is perhaps most widely known across South Dakota for its Schmeckfest event, a fundraiser and celebration of the community's cultural heritage that draws thousands of attendees each year.

Today, Freeman Academy serves 53 students in grades 1-12, including a dorm program for domestic and international boarding students. It is an accredited institution with a strong tradition in the arts, currently led by head of school Brice Kauffman. It is a member of Mennonite Schools Network and retains strong ties to Mennonite Church USA.

A motion to close the school was brought forward by the Freeman Academy Board of Directors during the special meeting, which was presided over by Brian Paff, board chair. Nearly two hours of discussion ensued, during which corporation members provided their perspectives — both in favor of and against — the motion.

The FJC/FA Corporation will retain its 501(c)3 status as a nonprofit organization. It plans to allow for a fallow year on campus during the 2026-27 school year, followed by a revisioning process for the organization.