

Contact: Andy Baumert

BIOECONOMY POLICY STATEMENT

Action Requested: Consider approving a policy statement regarding university initiatives in the bioeconomy.

Executive Summary: Iowa is rapidly becoming a center of activity in the emerging bioeconomy. Iowa and its three public universities are competing with research institutions in many other states which hope to attract significant investments in both research and production facilities in the area of biorenewables from federal agencies, private industry, and other sources. The following policy statement supports the universities in this competitive effort by emphasizing the importance of bioeconomy initiatives in the Board of Regents Strategic Plan and the importance of biorenewables to the Iowa economy. The statement directs the universities to aggressively pursue additional research and funding opportunities in areas related to the bioeconomy.

Making Iowa the World Center of the Emerging Bioeconomy

As part of its Mission Statement and its Strategic Plan, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, has directed Iowa's public universities to "support economic development in partnership with public and private sectors" and to "grow business opportunities in the state by building on research strengths and increasing technology transfer." To achieve these goals in light of the critical importance of agricultural production and processing in Iowa, the Board of Regents strongly supports efforts by Iowa's public universities to pursue research initiatives in biobased products and renewable fuels.

The Board of Regents believes Iowa is uniquely positioned to become the world leader in the conversion of crops and plant materials into chemicals, fuels, materials, and energy as well as food and feed products. A state-wide bioeconomy initiative offers many benefits to Iowa, including:

- increasing the value of Iowa's corn, soybean, and other crops
- enhancing Iowa's economy by introduction of new crops, production methods, and markets
- integrating Iowa's livestock sector with renewable fuels production
- improving environmental quality in Iowa and the world
- enhancing national security through the use of domestically-produced fuels and materials.

The development of biobased products and renewable energy will require an integrated approach to research and development. It will require multi-disciplinary research teams that cross lines between departments, colleges, universities, and the private sector. The Board of Regents strongly encourages Iowa's public universities to redouble their current efforts to:

- identify biorenewables research opportunities that utilize the scientific strengths of all three universities
- pursue biorenewables research and commercialization opportunities with the private sector
- aggressively seek funding partnerships for these efforts with industry and with local, state, and federal agencies

The Board also recognizes the key role of the Iowa Legislature and Governor in making Iowa the center of the emerging bioeconomy. Iowa's elected leaders have already taken several important steps to encourage the development of biorenewable resources and biobased products. The Board of Regents urges the Iowa Legislature and Governor to provide strong operational budget support for the universities to enable them to attract and retain the world-class researchers needed for this critical effort.