

Contact: Andy Baumert

**PRIVATE COLLEGE GROW IOWA VALUES FUND (GIVF) PROJECTS**

**Action Requested:** Consider recommending Board approval of GIVF funding for projects submitted by Luther College and Drake University.

**Executive Summary:**

An evaluation team of the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (IAICU) has reviewed two GIVF proposals submitted by Iowa independent institutions of higher learning. The IAICU has recommended the projects be awarded a total of \$160,000. The projects are:

- Drake University: \$60,000
- Luther College: \$100,000

If approved, funding for the proposals will be contingent on auditable and contracted procedures to be developed consistent with state code. Copies of both proposals are available at the Board of Regents office.

**Background:** House File 809, passed by the 2005 Session of the Iowa Legislature, appropriates \$5 million annually to the Board of Regents for capacity-building infrastructure in areas related to technology commercialization, entrepreneurship and business development for the purposes of state economic development. The legislation also permits the Board of Regents to award funds to independent institutions for these purposes. In each of the previous three fiscal years, the Board has awarded \$200,000 per year for projects at independent institutions. As part of flood-related budget adjustments, the Iowa Department of Management reduced the FY 2009 GIVF appropriation was reduced by 20%. As a result, the amount available to fund GIVF proposals from private colleges in FY 2009 is \$160,000.

A Request for Proposals was distributed to all Iowa independent colleges and universities through the IAICU. Two proposals were received. To evaluate the proposals, IAICU contracted with experienced proposal evaluators from IAICU member institutions that had elected not to submit proposals this year. The presidents of these institutions were asked to identify an experienced proposal or grant evaluator from their institution and enlist that person's commitment to read and evaluate the proposals and make recommendations. Presidents were not told the names of the applicants. Once the evaluations were completed, a recommendation was forwarded by the IAICU.

**Drake University: \$60,000**

Drake University seeks funding to assist in the establishment of Pharmacogenomics Training and Research Laboratory (PRTL). Pharmacogenomics is a discipline of health science related to the manner in which genes affect individual response to drugs. Pharmacogenomics has begun to offer tools for using individual genetic variations and drug responses to personalize or customize treatment or therapy in diseases such as breast cancer and leukemia. The proposal indicates the PRTL facility will serve as a central facility for Drake faculty involved in research requiring access to molecular, genomic and bioinformatics technologies. It is also proposed the facility would be available on a fee basis for individuals and organizations outside the university engaged in health care research. The facility will also be used for training current and future Drake students and to Iowa physicians, pharmacists and nurses involved in the use of the technology. The proposal indicates a positive commercial impact of the facility will result from:

- the increased number of students trained and available to Iowa employers
- intellectual property that will be developed by university and outside researchers.

The largest single component of the proposal is for purchase of a pyrosequencer for automatic DNA sequencing and genotyping. The project budget identifies \$153,651 in matching funds from private donors and Drake University. The proposal indicates the project leader, Dr. Pramod Mahajan, previously served as managing director at the University of Texas Medical Branch Molecular Biology Center and is the lead inventor or author of 30 issued U.S. patents.

Luther College: \$100,000

Luther College seeks funding for a project entitled "A New Class of Plant-Based Plastics Derived from Soybean and Corn Oil." Specifically, the researcher proposes to develop polyguanidine polymers from the fatty acids found in soybean and corn oil. The principal investigator believes these specific polymers, being entirely plant-based, offer advantages compared to other bioplastics derived from soybean or corn oil which still contain petrochemical based components. It is also believed the polyguanidine polymers have a more stable molecular structure which will make them well suited for particular applications like liquid crystal displays.

The project budget identifies \$100,505 in matching funds. The principal investigator has previously received GIVF funding through the Board of Regents for development of chemical catalysts and already holds one patent in corn-based plastics technology.