

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents

**From:** Board Office

**Subject:** Request by Iowa State University to Seek FCC Authority to Construct Repeater Stations in Spirit Lake and Carroll

**Date:** January 31, 2000

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize Iowa State University WOI Radio to seek Federal Communications Commission (FCC) authority to construct repeater stations in Spirit Lake and Carroll.

**Executive Summary:**

Iowa State University seeks permission to apply to the FCC to construct non-commercial educational FM repeater stations to serve the Spirit Lake/Lake Okoboji region in northwest Iowa and the region around Carroll, Iowa, in the west central part of the state. These stations would provide the first educational FM service to approximately 15,000 permanent residents in Iowa's Great Lakes region whose population increases by a factor of 10 during the summer vacation months, and to 19,000 residents in the west central region.

Financing for these facilities will be sought from the Public Telecommunications Facilities Program (PTFP) of the U. S. Department of Commerce and will be matched with additional support from potential listeners in the regions to be served. PTFP will likely provide 75% of the funding with the remainder to come from donor-based sources. No state-appropriated funds will be used to construct or operate these facilities. Construction costs for each station are estimated to be \$200,000. There will be no personnel costs because the two remotely controlled transmitters will not have studios; programming will be provided from public station KTPR located in Fort Dodge, Iowa. KTPR was recently acquired by WOI through a license transfer from Iowa Central Community College to ISU. Operational costs, including tower rent, electricity consumption, and equipment maintenance, will be supported by the operating budget of the ISU stations which will be augmented by additional donor-based revenues developed in the newly served regions.

The service expansion of this initiative is consistent with the Board's Statewide Public Radio Plan. Additionally, this request addresses the following Key Result Areas (KRAs) and action steps included in the Board's Strategic Plan:

KRA 2.0.0.0 Provide access to educational, research, and service opportunities within the missions of the Regent institutions.

Action Step 2.1.2.2 Increase collaboration and cooperation with other sectors of postsecondary education in marketing efforts.

Action Step 2.2.2.7 Encourage development of strategic alliances to increase access to services as measured by annual reports of individuals served.

### **Background:**

The northwest and west central regions are considered unserved by PTFP and the FCC because of the lack of protected service from a licensed public radio station. This expansion fulfills the Board's intention to provide at least one public radio service to every citizen of Iowa, as described in the Statewide Public Radio Plan.

The program service will be comprised of portions of the music, news, and information services being offered on the two WOI stations as well as programs which have been locally produced by ISU staff located in the Fort Dodge studios of KTPR.

### **Analysis:**

ISU's FCC counsel will handle the final preparation and filing of the two applications.

The KTPR advisory council, which includes participation by WOI station management, will become the representative body for this extended area of KTPR's coverage. It is likely that residents from the pertinent area will be invited to join the advisory council.

Preliminary sites for the two transmitters have been identified; contact is being made with the tower owners on the availability of space on the towers for ISU's facilities. The two sites under consideration are existing towers. If agreement can be reached, ISU will develop the proposed lease terms but not execute the agreements until the FCC approval is secured because it is necessary to certify to the Federal Grant Agency that the sites are available and a lease will be developed if the project is funded. Lease agreements will be presented to the

Board for approval prior to construction of the stations. The University will proceed with the construction projects in accordance with Board procedures.

It is possible that ISU's applications to the FCC may be countered by other broadcasters vying for the same opportunities. The FCC has recently adopted plans for a new low power FM broadcast service for schools, churches, and community groups which may set off a race for all available frequencies.

Public radio station KWIT operated by Iowa Western Community College has been invited to participate in the development of the Spirit Lake/Lake Okoboji service in compliance with the Regents' objective to foster cooperation between Regent and non-Regent institutional licensees. Regent station management at KUNI and KSUI have also been informed of ISU's request for the repeater stations.

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Diana Gonzalez  
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Approved:

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Frank J. Stork