

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

UPDATE REPORT OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

Actions Requested: Receive the update report regarding the feasibility study to examine the administrative and programmatic functions of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School and the Iowa School for the Deaf as required by Iowa Code §270.10.

Executive Summary: The Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired operate under the direction of the Board of Regents as two separate entities to provide needed educational services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and students who are blind or visually impaired. In order to plan for future effective and efficient operation of services for students with sensory impairments, it is necessary to examine the administrative and programmatic functions of the two schools. This update report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to provide “educational excellence and impact; and economic development and vitality.” It also addresses Goal #8 of the Board’s Strategic Plan – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

The Board of Regents Executive Director met with the Director of the Iowa Department of Management to discuss the proposed feasibility study. Iowa Code §270.10 specifies that “the state board of regents shall not merge the school for the deaf at Council Bluffs with the Iowa Braille and sight saving school at Vinton or close either of those institutions until all of the following requirements have been met:

1. The department of management has presented to the general assembly a comprehensive plan, program, and fiscal analysis of the existing circumstances and the circumstances which would prevail upon the proposed merger or closing, together with data which would support the contention that the merger or closing will be more efficient and effective than continuation of the existing facilities.

The analysis shall include a detailed study of the educational implications of the merger or closing, the impact on the students, and the opinions and research of nationally recognized experts in the field of the education of visually impaired and deaf students. The comprehensive plan shall further include a study relating to the programming, fiscal consequences, and political implications which would result if either a merger or an agreement under chapter 28E should be implemented between the school for the deaf in Council Bluffs and comparable state programs in the state of Nebraska.

2. The general assembly has studied the plans, programs, and fiscal analysis and has reviewed their impact on the programs.
3. The general assembly has enacted legislation authorizing either the closing or the merger to take effect not sooner than two years after the enactment of the legislation.”

The Department of Management will be responsible for establishing the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee. The Committee will include appropriate agency and stakeholder representatives. (Attachment A) The Department of Management will also make the final selection of the nationally recognized expert(s) in the field of sensory impairments who will guide the research and discussion of the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee.

- ◇ Proposed Feasibility Study and Planning Committee. The following agency representatives are recommended for membership on the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee:
 - ⇒ Department of Management representative
 - ⇒ Iowa Department of Education – Chief, Bureau of Student and Family Support Services¹²
 - ⇒ Board of Regents - Superintendent¹²
 - ⇒ Board of Regents – Chief Academic Officer
 - ⇒ Area Education Agency – Director¹²
 - ⇒ Department for the Blind - Director¹²
 - ⇒ Department of Public Health – Iowa Early Hearing Detection and Intervention¹
 - ⇒ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation - Director²
 - ⇒ Physician from University Hospitals and Clinics providing services to the deaf population²
 - ⇒ Community professional who is deaf²
 - ⇒ Parent representative of current student who is deaf or hard of hearing
 - ⇒ Parent representative of current student who is blind or visually impaired
 - ⇒ Representative of Iowa constituent organizations for deaf and hard of hearing
 - ⇒ Representative of Iowa constituent organizations for blind and visually impaired
 - ⇒ Local Education Agency representative
 - ⇒ Deaf Services of Iowa representative
 - ⇒ Parent representative of Iowa School for the Deaf student

- ◇ Support team participation. The following representatives will provide support for the Committee.
 - Program directors – Iowa School for the Deaf; Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Iowa Department for the Blind.
 - Business services directors – Board of Regents institutions; Iowa School for the Deaf; Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
 - Feasibility Study and Planning Committee facilitator.
 - Service practitioners for students who are blind or deaf.

- ◇ Consultation support. Nationally recognized expert(s) in the field of sensory impairments will be selected to guide the research and discussion of the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee.

- ◇ Proposed meeting schedule. The Feasibility Study and Planning Committee will meet on the following dates - June 25, 2012, July 30, 2012, August 27, 2012, September 24, 2012, October 22, 2012, and November 26, 2012.

¹ Executive Committee for Iowa Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

² Executive Team for Iowa Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

◇ Proposed study timeline.

- ⇒ Spring 2012 – Board of Regents approved contact with Department of Management
- ⇒ Spring 2012 – Fall 2012 – Feasibility Study is conducted
- ⇒ Fall 2012 – Draft of Feasibility Study Report is prepared
- ⇒ Summer 2012 – Fall 2012 – Public hearings are conducted regarding the Feasibility Study draft
- ⇒ Fall 2012 – Feasibility Study Report is finalized
- ⇒ Fall 2012 – Iowa Department of Management provides comprehensive plan which addresses §270.10 to General Assembly