

Contact: Andy Baumert

PRIVATE COLLEGE GROW IOWA VALUES FUND (GIVF) PROJECTS

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

Executive Summary:

An evaluation team of the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (IAICU) has reviewed and ranked GIVF proposals submitted by five Iowa independent institutions of higher learning. The IAICU has recommended three projects be awarded a total of \$200,000. The projects are:

- Des Moines University: \$78,000
- Drake University: \$67,000
- Luther College: \$55,000.

If approved, funding for the proposals will be contingent on auditable and contracted procedures to be developed consistent with state code. Copies of all five proposals are included in the Regent Exhibit Book.

Background: House File 809, passed by the 2005 Session of the Iowa Legislature, appropriates \$5 million 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.

A Request for Proposals was distributed to all Iowa independent colleges and universities through the IAICU. Five proposals totaling more than \$700,000 were received. To evaluate and prioritize the proposals, IAICU contracted with experienced proposal evaluators from four IAICU member institutions that had elected not to submit proposals in 2006. 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, evaluate and rank the proposals from first to fifth. Presidents were not told the names of the applicants.

Once each of the evaluations and rankings was received, a tally of the cumulative rankings was completed. In completing the tally and resulting cumulative rankings, three of the five proposals were rated as first, second or third by each of the evaluators. With this sort of grouping, it was determined to negotiate with each of the three universities based on the narrow margin of ranking. The top rated program, Des Moines University, was asked to adjust their request from GIVF to \$78,000; the second, Drake University, to \$67,000; and the third, Luther College, to \$55,000. All of the award winners have submitted revised budgets, which are amended to their original budget request.

Des Moines University: \$78,000

Des Moines University seeks \$78,000 to conduct research designed to provide new methods for identifying mutations in the genetic material of pregnant women that increase their risk of delivering infants prematurely and to seek a commercial opportunity for disseminating the work. The research will begin with DNA test screening of pregnant women to provide the information necessary to create a test panel for specific mutations that can be combined into a single test for screening pregnancies. The Principal Investigators (PIs) state this detection method can then be developed as a rapid one-step commercial service or product. The PIs state they will conduct a rigorous feasibility study to determine the market potential for a prematurity test panel and take initial steps to develop a plan for commercialization. The PIs estimate there are annually 60,000 cases of prematurity in the United States and that the market for a prematurity screening product may be ten times that number. The project budget submitted identifies \$105,989 in direct and indirect cost share for the first year of the project.

Drake University: \$67,000

Drake University (DU) seeks \$67,000 to enhance technology and product commercialization through DU's College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences DELTA Rx Institute and the Drake Undergraduate Science Collaboration Institute (DUSCI). The proposal would fund programs designed to develop entrepreneurial skills through entrepreneurial workshops to educate and assist faculty and students seeking commercialization of a product or idea. The project will also provide funding for participation by students in a pharmaceutical compounding boot camp where they will learn how to develop new formulas and how to find markets for commercialization to hospitals and pharmacies in Iowa. Students will work with mentors to prepare business plans for submission to the Pappajohn Center business plan competition at Drake University. The DELTA Rx Institute is also in development of a "product concept competition" that will provide a further venue for commercialization. The project budget submitted identifies \$516,019 in direct and indirect cost share.

Luther College: \$55,000

Luther College seeks \$55,000 for a project to develop novel polymerization catalysts that will strengthen the viability of biodegradable polymers produced from Iowa crops. The annual production of polylactide (PLA) from renewable sources such as corn is currently estimated at 150 million pounds, with a number of uses in fiber, film and packaging materials. PLA from biodegradable sources is currently produced by companies such as Cargill, which have a significant grain processing presence in Iowa. However, the product cannot be used in some applications because current production methods result in a product with lesser thermal or tensile strength compared to petroleum-based products like polyethylene or polypropylene. The PIs propose to investigate the use of titanium-based catalysts in the production of PLA from biodegradable sources which may improve the thermal and tensile performance of the product. The PIs will evaluate the commercial potential of the technology and will pursue patent protection and commercialization opportunities. The project budget identifies a total of \$134,607 in direct and indirect cost share.