

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board of Regents
Subject: Distance Education Policy and Institutional Distance Education Reports
Date: January 31, 2000

Recommended Actions:

1. Approve the revised policy.
2. Receive the institutional distance education reports.

Executive Summary:

Proposed Revision to Distance Education Policy

In 1997, the Board of Regents approved a new distance education policy. Some revisions are now proposed by the Distance Education Study Group for approval by the Board. (See Attachment 1, page 9.) The proposed changes are intended to clarify the Board's original intentions regarding distance education programs. If the Board approves this new policy the institutions will be required to:

- (1) Report all new distance education degree program proposals to the Board for referral to the Interinstitutional Committee on Educational Coordination.
- (2) Present to the Board an annual comprehensive report on distance education.
- (3) Report all new programs delivered by web/internet and other technologies to the Board for one-time approval.
- (4) Provide timely reports, for information purposes only, on all new locations for existing programs.

Distance Education Report Update

At its November 1999 meeting, the Board requested the universities to provide information at the February 2000 meeting of the Board regarding their strategic distance education plans which had not been included in the November report. In addition to updating the implementation of the universities' strategic plans, which had been adopted at the October 1998 meeting of the Board, this report includes a brief analysis of the educational needs of Iowa citizens. (See Attachments 2, 3, and 4, pages 10-44.)

The Regents' commitment to distance education is consistent with numerous aspects of the Board's strategic plan, especially Key Result Area 2.0.0.0, Access. The off-campus enterprise must be of quality comparable to instruction on

campus, to be consistent with KRA 1.0.0.0, Quality, and the current policy on distance education. Some of the specific Action Steps in the Board's strategic plan related to distance education include:

- 1.1.4.3 Each institution increase its service to lowans, nation, and the world
- 2.1.1.3 Implement policy on distance education
- 2.1.1.5 Raise the percentage of lowans possessing baccalaureate degrees to the national average
- 4.4.2.1 Identify existing institutional cooperative/collaborative programs to form baseline data and develop a reporting format to the Board
- 4.4.2.3 Explore opportunities for partnership among the Regent institutions and with other sectors of education

Background:

The Board's strategic plan encourages the Regent institutions to anticipate and meet consumer needs by offering courses and programs through distance education means, and to cooperate and collaborate when beneficial to the consumers. Under its current policy, the Board must review and approve distance education program proposals, and annually must receive reports on distance education activities. The Board established a Priority Study Group on distance education in 1999 to clarify its policy in order to serve the citizens of Iowa more effectively. The Board continues to encourage interinstitutional cooperation and collaboration, and has expressed its desire to examine more closely the impact of incremental costs of delivery and the question of differential tuition.

In October 1999, the Board requested the universities to make the 1999 distance education report a comprehensive report, including more than the data typically contained in the SECEC annual reports. Specifically, the universities were asked to report progress made on their strategic plans for distance education since the plans were approved by the Board in October 1998. The institutional reports should emphasize examples of collaborative activities and assessments of student and/or program outcomes, as well as cost analysis. These topics were inadequately addressed in October. The Board requested that institutional representatives be appointed to work with the Board Office in outlining the February 2000 and October 2000 reports. That group agreed that the February report would not contain descriptions of collaborative distance education activities which the universities engage in with private higher education institutions and other organizations, nor would it include analysis of the issue of differential tuition or incremental costs of distance education. These items and enrollment statistics will be reported in October. Further, the group decided that the SECEC report will no longer be given, because that report did not report the full range of distance education activities at the three campuses. The data included in the SECEC report will still be reported, but integrated into the one comprehensive report.

At its October 2000 meeting, the Board will receive the annual report on distance education. Data on student enrollments, collaborative efforts with other institutions, and an analysis of the incremental costs of distance education, which previously appeared in State Extension and Continuing Education Council (SECEC) reports, will be included in that report. The October report will also include information from an interinstitutional group reviewing how the Regent institutions might expand use of the Internet for educational purposes, i.e., "virtual university" options.

Analysis:

Proposed Revision to Distance Education Policy

At its July 1999 meeting, the Board approved the appointment of a Study Group on Distance Education. Its tasks included consideration of possible refinements or clarifications to the Board's distance education policy necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and serving the purpose for which it was intended, including the interests and needs of all regions of the state. At its several meetings since July, the members concluded that changes occurring in delivery modes of distance education courses, the need to clarify the review sequence for new program approval, and the definition of "location" would best be addressed by revising the policy statement. The Priority Study Group, based on input received at its meetings, recommends changes in the Board's distance education policy (Regent Procedural Guide § 6.32).

Attachment 1, page 9, presents the proposed revision. New language is underlined. Words and phrases to be deleted are struck-through. The proposed statement is now divided into three sections: policy, reporting procedures, and definitions.

Distance Education Report Update

National Trends and State Data

Before turning to summaries of the three universities' progress of their strategic plans on distance education, it would be appropriate to discuss both national trends and data regarding educational completion levels and projected educational needs of Iowa citizens. According to a study of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), "Distance Education at Postsecondary Education Institutions: 1997-98," since 1995 the number of higher education institutions offering education courses outside of the traditional classroom has increased by one-third, from 33 percent in 1995 to 44 percent in 1998. Seventy-nine percent of public four-year institutions, as of 1997-98, were offering distance education classes. Enrollments, as well as the number of degree and certificate programs, have doubled between 1994-95 and 1997-98. The NCES found that the largest increase in distance education courses were in those taught over the Internet, which rose from offerings by 28 percent of institutions to 60 percent in 1998. In 1997-98, colleges and universities offered a total of 1,230 degree programs and 340 certificate programs. Nation-wide, this resulted in 54,000 distance education courses and an enrollment of 1.6 million students.

U.S. Census data from 1990 for Iowa, updated with a small sample survey in 1998, present statistics which make definitive analysis difficult. In 1990, 80.1 percent of Iowans, 25 years and over, were high school graduates; that compared with a national state average of 75.2 percent. That year, Iowa ranked 12th highest among the states with the percentage of graduates. However, in 1990, only 16.9 percent of Iowans 25 years and over had received a bachelor's degree. The national average per state was 20.3 percent; Iowa in 1990 was ranked 40th among states. In the 1998 update, census data estimated that approximately 364,000 residents, or 20.3 percent, had received a bachelor's degree. Iowa's ranking among states dropped to 41st, tied with Idaho. It should be noted that the highest figures for residents with bachelor's degrees were 36.5 percent in the District of Columbia and 34.0 percent in Colorado.

Inquiries were made with state agencies to determine if they had conducted surveys or were aware of instruments by public or private groups that had attempted to ascertain the educational needs of Iowans. No evidence was found. The tentative conclusion, based on enrollment figures in credit courses at public and private colleges, and participation in extension courses, suggests that Iowans are interested in distance education courses. More research is needed in this area.

The University of Iowa

The strategic plan of the University of Iowa for distance education submitted in 1998 set forth three broad goals:

Goal 1: to ensure that the quality of off-campus courses and programs is of the same high level as the on-campus courses and programs

Goal 2: to identify areas of need for off-campus academic programming and to provide greater access to courses and degree programs in those areas

Goal 3: to ensure that the design, development, and distribution of quality programs are accomplished as economically as possible

To meet Goal 1, SUI focuses on two major objectives: use of regular tenured and tenure-track faculty to develop and deliver distance education courses, and use of the same faculty review process as is applied to on-campus courses. While the University prefers that the delivery of distance education courses be part of the regular teaching load of the tenured and tenure-track faculty, the primary practice has been that off-campus instruction remains on an overload basis. A third objective has emerged to assist in meeting the goal – the Division of Continuing Education currently funds a full-time position in the University Libraries. That staff member is solely concerned with providing support to off-campus course offerings.

To meet Goal 2, SUI monitors customer demand for distance education programs. During this past year, the University began two new education programs: a cohort-based Master of Social Work program in Sioux City and a statewide degree and certificate program in Public Health. The College of Business has begun a third program, a Master of Business Administration, in Muscatine.

To meet Goal 3, to deliver quality programs as economically as possible, SUI has continued to shift to increased use of electronic formats, such as ICN, Internet, and use of World Wide Web.

The University of Iowa continues to collaborate with other Regent universities. In Fall 1999, SUI course 53:195 Winter Highway Maintenance (Engineering) was transmitted to the ISU campus via ICN. For Spring 2000, the following courses will be transmitted via ICN:

63:250 Health Behavior and Health Education (Public Health) [UNI]

152:199 Promoting Health Globally (Global Health) [UNI]

In February 2000, ISU will transmit via the ICN an Engineering Seminar to SUI. Further collaborative efforts are scheduled for Spring 2000.

In summary, the SUI report provides a narrative of past, present, and some future programs. As informative as it is, the report would be of more benefit in the future if it provided documentation similar to that in the University's November progress report. That is, benchmarks and targeted indicators should be developed. For example, page 3 of the report lists some standards against which SUI proposed to measure its progress toward the goals, including student evaluations of every distance education course, an annual survey of degree recipients, and monitoring of the percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty teaching off-campus. No specifics were found in this report on these measures. It is expected that they will be found in the October 2000 report.

Iowa State University

The ISU report is organized around three themes; it makes frequent references to the Key Result Areas and Action Steps in the Board of Regents' strategic plan. The first section details examples of collaborative activities among Regent universities, repeating to some extent what was in the SECEC report. They include: the SECEC coordinating and data-compiling activities; academic interaction for degree programs, i.e., the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) degree program; support to the Regent Education Centers (the Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center, the Quad Cities Graduate Center, and the Tri-State Graduate Center). Pages 2-4 provide specific examples of other programs and activities jointly sponsored by Regent Universities and/or other organizations. Examples include:

- Downtown Des Moines Higher Education Center (Regent universities and Drake University)
- WEB Page -- a WEB based catalogue developed by Iowa Public Television (IPTV) for listing and providing easier access to all courses offered by accredited Iowa higher education institutions
- Icash -- ISU Textiles & Clothing Department Extension working with SUI in relation to the Iowa Center for Agricultural Safety and Health
- State-Wide Small Business & Entrepreneurship Symposium -- an activity of the three Regent universities to showcase activities related to small business and entrepreneurial activities.

The second major section of the ISU progress report on the strategic plan for distance education (pp. 5-7) describes three aspects of the plan. The first is **selecting delivery systems**. Examples mentioned include: face-to-face delivery of three master's programs at the Des Moines Area Community College campus; nine ICN sites on campus; World Wide Web; videotape courses; correspondence courses, and conferences. **Identifying faculty**, which relates to Action Step 1.1.2.3, "recruiting an outstanding, strong faculty to foster intellectual vitality for graduate programs," is the second aspect of the plan. It calls for provision of incentives for faculty to participate, and additional tenure-track faculty positions. The report asserts that ISU is in the process of increasing the focus on distance education, but offers no empirical evidence. The third aspect of the plan is **enrolling and supporting students**, reflecting KRA 2.0.0.0, Access, and specifically, Action Step 2.1.1.2, "develop and implement effective strategies for recruitment and retention of students." ISU's Extended and Continuing Education (ECE) system is developing new procedures for marketing, counseling, admitting, and registering life-long learners in various programs. The University has created "Acropolis," an information technology effort to extend educational opportunities into new settings (businesses, homes) and make them available 24 hours a day.

The third section of ISU's report is a reprint of selected pages from its progress report of November 1999. The benchmarks reported include: (1) enrollment in distance education credit and non-credit courses and programs; (2) total Extension clients served, evaluations received, and client satisfaction; and (3) programs initiated with community colleges. Data on these benchmarks during 1999-2000 will be provided in the next progress report in November 2000.

In summary, the ISU report clearly links its activities to the Board of Regents' strategic plan. The examples given of programs and data from the benchmarks are helpful in measuring progress toward the goals. The area which was deficient in data and example was the recruitment and training of faculty who teach distance education courses.

University of Northern Iowa

The UNI report begins by stating that this follow-up report builds upon data and information presented in the SECEC report. This report concentrates on progress made in implementing the UNI Strategic Plan for Distance Education approved by the Board of Regents in 1998, including descriptions of collaborative efforts with other Regent universities.

The first section of the report provides examples of collaborative activities, including the Bachelor of Liberal Studies course offerings, exchange of information on planned initiatives, such as the M.A. in Library Science program (with SUI), construction of ICN classrooms in Mason City, Council Bluffs (2 sites), and participation in the Regional Study Centers and Regional Telecommunications Councils.

The next section of the report lists the five-year strategic goals and objectives, along with brief statements of progress. Examples include:

- Goal 1: Ensure that the quality of off-campus courses and programs is the same as on-campus courses and programs.
Progress made (Selected examples from the report):
 - *The Rod Library provides electronic and toll-free access to its services, and has a resource person on staff to assist distance education students.*
 - *Each off-campus program has a faculty adviser.*
 - *Continuing Education staff meet with departments to encourage off-campus delivery of courses and programs, do surveys, and conduct informational meetings.*
 - *The Continuing Education Office has hired an instructional developer to provide technical assistance for faculty members who are teaching ICN and web-based courses.*
 - *Off-campus courses are being taught as part of regular teaching loads with increasing regularity. (Currently, the majority of teaching in 14 off-campus graduate degree cohorts is being taught on-load.)*
 - *The University now has 11 different programs that are offered off-campus continually.*
- Goal 2: Increase the availability of off-campus academic programming.
Progress made (Selected examples):
 - *WebCT has been added as a delivery vehicle in many distance education courses, and an increasing number of courses are being made available via the world wide web.*
 - *UNI offered at least one course in 109 different Iowa communities during the 1998-99 academic year.*
 - *The Division of Continuing Education is in the process of hiring a new advisor who will devote most of her/his time to promoting the BLS degree and advising students.*
- Goal 3: Ensure that the design, development, and distribution of accessible and affordable programs is accomplished on a cost-effective basis.
Progress made (Selected examples):
 - *All off-campus programs have multi-year schedules; once a program is started, it is taken through completion.*
 - *UNI plans to increase collaboration with other Regent institutions, Iowa's private colleges and community colleges.*
- Goal 4: Increase the number of credit professional continuing education conferences, workshops, institutes, short courses, and training opportunities intended for professional development or career enhancement.
Progress made (Selected examples):
 - *The College of Education had 745 participants in its 31st Beginning Reading Conference, the highest enrollment in its history.*

- *New events offered by the College of Education included: "Iowa Mental Health Conference," "National Playground Safety School," and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences sponsored an event for teachers, "Fall Festival: Energy and Environment."*
- *UNI provided on-site, non-credit programs at John Deere Waterloo, IBP Sioux City, and others.*

In summary, the UNI follow-up report contained little statistical information, noting data from its credit and non-credit courses was found in the SECEC report. The report asserts that the University is committed to collaborative activities and offers some examples. The majority of the report outlined four goals, related objectives, and gave examples of implementation.

Following the October meeting, the Board Office attempted to locate data on the educational needs of Iowans. What is available is minimal and dated.

The February 2000 reports of the three universities were to include previously omitted data. While they do provide descriptions and extensive narratives of distance education activities since 1998, they offer little empirical data. Each institution concluded that it is meeting its unique goals, and did offer a number of examples of collaborative activities among the Regent institutions.

The Regent universities and the Board Office need to increase cooperative efforts with one another as well as with other higher education institutions and public and private agencies and organizations, to initiate, compile, and share relevant studies on distance education needs of the citizens of Iowa. The work group appointed following the October 1999 meeting should continue to meet to coordinate these activities.

In the October 2000 reports, each university should offer a complete report of its distance education activities, as specified in the distance education policy of the Board. Each report should include descriptions of collaborative activities with other institutions and agencies. The universities should increase documentation of outcomes of their goals and objectives, through the use of new benchmarks and indicators consistent with their distinctive missions.

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Approved:

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