

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents

From: Board Office

Subject: Progress Report on Teacher Training Programs for the Blind and Deaf

Date: January 31, 2000

Recommended Actions:

1. Receive an oral progress report on Teacher Training Programs for the Blind and Deaf.
2. Request that a summary report, with recommendations for actions by the Regent universities, be presented to the Board as soon as possible, but no later than July 2000.

Executive Summary:

When the Board of Regents received the Annual Reports of the ISD and IBSSS Advisory Committees in July 1999, it requested that the Regent institutions study the possibility of collaborative programs to meet the state's need for teachers of students who are deaf or hearing impaired and students who are blind or visually impaired.

Three of the Board's Key Result Areas are directly related to this topic -- access, diversity, and quality. Young Iowa citizens who are hearing impaired or visually impaired should have access to a quality education. State and national data indicate that schools are having increasing difficulty in finding teachers for these students.

President Robert Koob of the University of Northern Iowa, working with a task force, was asked to report on the potential of programs at the Regent universities for teachers of these special students. Members of the task force included Christine A. Macfarlane, Coordinator, Mental Disabilities Program (UNI); Sandra K. Alper, Head, Department of Special Education (UNI); Joseph J. Smaldino, Professor of Audiology, Department of Communicative Disorders (UNI); and Kenneth M. Bleile, Head, Department of Communicative Disorders (UNI), and the two superintendents. The task force has completed a first draft of two papers,

one related to preparing teachers of the deaf and the other related to preparing teachers of the blind.

The papers have recently been distributed to the Advisory Committees. The task force is in the process of gathering input from persons on campuses as well as members of the Advisory Committees and state agencies. Topics covered in the papers include: need for teachers in Iowa schools and Area Education Agencies (AEAs) as well as the special schools, review of preparation programs available nationally and regionally, current course offerings at Regent universities, and cost estimates for establishing two collaborative programs.

Preliminary conclusions are that a definite need exists for two programs; the state certification requirements are so different that one general program would not be appropriate. It is estimated that enrollments would be relatively low. The task force believes that the programs should be offered at the graduate level. Initial evidence suggests that the University of Northern Iowa could offer many of the courses, although the other Regent universities would each provide some courses over the ICN. A few courses may have to be contracted with other agencies.

Background and Analysis:

In Iowa, there are approximately 1,300 students who are deaf or hard of hearing and require specialized educational services. During Academic Year 1996-97, an estimated 82.7 FTE teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing were needed throughout the state; nine of these were not fully qualified (i.e., did not meet all of the course work or experience requirements of the state endorsements) and 1.25 FTE positions went vacant. In Academic Year 1997-98, fifteen of these teachers were not fully qualified and one consultant was not fully qualified. Only two AEAs have hired consultants in the field. For Academic Year 1999-2000, the need in the state is for 3 consultants, 133 community-based teachers of the hearing impaired, and 45 itinerant teachers. The estimate is that 14 to 18 teachers may retire, and another ten percent of the total either will leave the teaching profession or move to another area of teaching.

In Iowa, there are approximately 650 students who are blind or visually impaired. During Academic Year 1996-97 and again in Academic Year 1997-98, seven employed teachers of the visually impaired were not fully certified, i.e., not having all the necessary course work or experience. Within Iowa, the estimate is that IBSSS and the AEAs anticipate hiring up to 20 teachers of the visually impaired within the next four years. Currently, there is no university-based special education program in the area of visual impairment in Iowa nor is there reciprocity with any other state to honor a valid endorsement.

In reviewing the national picture, there are 17 undergraduate teacher preparation programs for educators of the hearing impaired, 30 programs which are graduate only, and 19 programs providing both levels. However, not all programs meet accreditation standards established by the Council on Education of the Deaf (CED). Only two programs exist at the undergraduate level for teachers of the visually impaired; also, some of the programs do not have national accreditation. Based on the endorsement requirements in Iowa, the task force concluded that it would be better to establish collaborative programs at the graduate level. This would allow teachers to first gain subject matter expertise and experience before receiving the specialized training at the master's degree level.

The task force concluded that the University of Northern Iowa would have a strong foundation for offering both programs, through the Department of Special Education and the Department of Communicative Disorders. The curriculum for each program would need to be supplemented by courses provided by the University of Iowa and Iowa State University. Further discussion is needed on what courses and staff are essential to the programs and if additional courses from other educational institutions or agencies would be necessary.

Based on the input received from the Advisory Committees and others, the task force will present evidence regarding need, duplication, enrollment projections, and costs as soon as is feasible. It should, however, be no later than July, 2000, when the ISD and IBSSS Advisory Committees present their annual reports to the Board..

Charles R. Kniker

Approved: _____
Frank J. Stork