

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents  
**From:** Board Office  
**Subject:** Study of the Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center  
**Date:** January 7, 2002

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**Recommended Actions:**

1. Receive the report.
2. Approve the Board Office recommendations.

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**Executive Summary:** Following the annual governance report on regional study centers in May 2001, the Board of Regents requested that a study be conducted to determine the continued viability of the Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center (SWIRRC).

**Emphasis of Study** The Interinstitutional Committee on Educational Coordination (ICEC) directed the State Extension and Continuing Education Council (SECEC), whose members serve on the "Board" of the SWIRRC, to conduct a study with particular emphasis on budgetary considerations, location, and continued viability in light of decreased enrollments.

**SCEC Recommendation** The SECEC completed its study and concluded that while the role of centers in general has changed, the SWIRRC continues to address the needs for which it was created. Furthermore, it serves as a symbol of the Regents' commitment to areas of the state that have a significant population base, but do not have reasonable access to the three Regent institutions. The SECEC recommended that the Center be continued at least until its lease expires in 2003.

**Board Office Recommendation** The Board Office recommends that the Center be continued at least until its lease expires in 2003 and that the ICEC continue to explore opportunities for a program of courses leading to certificates or degrees in business.

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**Link to Strategic Plan:** This report addresses the following Key Result Areas (KRAs) 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.

Objective 2.2.2.0 Evaluate annually and, where appropriate, make recommendations to meet relevant educational and service needs of the state.

Strategy 2.2.2.0 Recognize the need of all Iowans for access to services provided by Regent institutions including health care services, extension, and services provided by the special schools.

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**Background:**

In 1991, the Board of Regents established a Regents Resource Center in Southwest Iowa. The mission of the Center was to provide increased access to graduate and undergraduate education and other Regent universities' resources for area residents.

Each year, the Board reviews the Center in its annual governance report on regional study centers. The review includes an analysis of the budget, enrollments, and services provided. Among the three regional study centers, the SWIRRC is unique because it offers courses provided only by the three Regent universities, it offers undergraduate education, and it does not have community representation on its Board.

As a result of the May 2001 annual report, which indicated that the enrollment at the SWIRRC had decreased for the second consecutive year while enrollments at the Quad Cities Graduate Study Center and the Tri-State Graduate Center had increased, the Board requested that a study be conducted to determine the continued viability of the Center.

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**Analysis:**

The goals established for the SWIRRC in 1991 included developing a site for the Center, obtaining resources from the Regent institutions to provide information to clients, creating a structure for the SWIRRC, increasing availability of course and program offerings, and implementing a marketing plan.

As a result of its study in Fall 2001, the SECEC determined that these goals have been accomplished and continue to be addressed on an on-going basis. The Center continues its marketing plan for increasing enrollments and overall awareness, assists the Regent universities with outreach and continuing education initiatives, expands course and programs offerings, increases opportunities for cultural arts and other non-credit programming, and claims to serve as an advocate for the educational needs of the citizens of Western Iowa.

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**Enrollment**

During the past decade, the greatest number of students at the Center has enrolled in education courses; the majority of students have been parts of cohorts. One reason for the decline in enrollment in 2000-2001 is that a large cohort completed an on-site UNI graduate program in Elementary Reading and Language Arts. Creation of new cohorts tends to increase the enrollment.

Getting students to enroll at the Center has not been easy. In Omaha, the University of Nebraska is relatively inexpensive and Creighton University offers special incentives to teachers seeking graduate degrees. At the undergraduate level, Buena Vista University has a branch campus at Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs.

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Revenues and Expenses of the SWIRRC

The primary source of revenue for the SWIRRC is a state allocation of \$114,672 for 2001-2002. An additional \$31,054 also has been provided by the SCEC funds to provide financial assistance for western Iowa educational programming.

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Location of the SWIRRC

The Center was moved to the Careers Building on the Iowa School for the Deaf campus in Council Bluffs. The Center has approximately 3,000 square feet of rented space at a cost of \$18,750 per year. The Center space includes a classroom, conference room, computer area, faculty work area, director's office, and secretarial space. The Careers Building contains two ICN rooms that are scheduled by the Center and used primarily by the Regent institutions.

Discussion about locating the Center elsewhere, such as at Iowa Western Community College, has resulted in general agreement that no better space could be found for the current price. Furthermore, few new spaces would have two ICN rooms that are critical for course delivery. The SECEC has recommended that the Center remain in its current location at least until the expiration of its current lease in 2003.

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Collaboration with Other Institutions

Southwest Iowa is a limited market in terms of population and educational needs. The SECEC indicates that there is no advantage to extending services that are paid by the Regent institutions to other educational institutions that might be competing for the same students as the Regent institutions. However, such cooperation may better serve the needs of Iowans in this area.

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Effect of Technology

The advent of the ICN and the World Wide Web, which occurred after the Center was created in 1991, has allowed learners greater access to local and global programs regardless of location. The three Regent institutions currently provide on-line courses in the SWIRRC service area. Televised courses also have decreased the need for the SWIRRC and other centers.

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SCEC  
Recommendation

The SCEC believes that the SWIRRC continues to do the work it was established to do. It serves as a focal point for Regent activities in that part of the state, provides access to ICN classrooms, assists with program promotion, and provides other services requested by the Regent institutions. The Center continues its marketing plan for increasing enrollments and overall awareness, assists the Regent universities with outreach and continuing education initiatives, expands course and program offerings, increases opportunities for cultural arts and other non-credit programming, and claims to serve as an advocate for the educational needs of the citizens of western Iowa. The Center director meets regularly with community members to obtain input on community needs and interests.

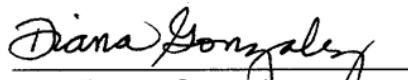
While the programming in southwest Iowa would not suffer dramatically if the Center did not exist, the Center does represent a symbol of the Regents' commitment to areas of the state that have a significant population base, but do not have reasonable access to the three Regent institutions.

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**Board Office  
Recommendations:**

1. The Board Office recommends that the Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center be continued at least until its lease expires in 2003.
2. In the meantime, the Regent institutions should work closely with the Center staff to continue to develop programming that meets the needs of the citizens of western Iowa. In particular, the Board Office recommends that the ICEC continue to explore opportunities for a program of courses leading to certificates or degrees in business.

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Diana Gonzalez

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Robert J. Barak