

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents  
**From:** Board Office  
**Subject:** Annual Report of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee  
**Date:** July 7, 2000

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Receive the report.
2. Approve the appointments to the IBSSS Advisory Committee:

**Executive Summary:**

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee presents its annual report as specified in the "Regent Procedural Guide §1.07G". The Committee serves a three-fold purpose: (1) to advise the Board of Regents on policy matters related to the education of visually-impaired students; (2) to advise the superintendent in the development of policy based on current educational research; and (3) to forge linkages between the Regent universities and the School for research and professional development opportunities.

The Committee includes an administrator and a faculty member from each Regent university, a subject area consultant from outside of Iowa, a visually impaired person from the community, the superintendent, and a Board Office representative.

The Advisory Committee met twice during the 1999-2000 academic year. Dr. Christine Macfarlane, associate professor of special education at the University of Northern Iowa, chaired the Committee. A copy of the minutes of both meetings and the roster of Advisory Committee members are included in the Regent Exhibit Book. The following items were discussed at the meetings:

- ◆ IBSSS strategic plan update 1993-2002;
- ◆ performance indicators;
- ◆ teacher training for visually impaired students;
- ◆ NCA outcomes accreditation;
- ◆ Summer 1999 summer programs;

- ◆ Fall 1999 enrollment;
- ◆ IBSSS reorganization plan; and
- ◆ Iowa Department of Education compliance review.

This report addresses the following objectives contained in the Board's Strategic Plan:

- 2.2.0.0 Evaluate annually and, where appropriate, make recommendations to meet relevant educational and service needs of the state.
- 4.2.0.0 Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions.
- 4.4.0.0 Strengthen public understanding and confidence in the Board of Regents, its governance authority, and the programs and services of the institutions under its jurisdiction by measurable indicators of legislative outcomes and public support to be annually reported to the Board.

The Board is also asked to approve the appointments to the IBSSS Advisory Committee. Committee members are nominated by their respective institutions and serve for a period of two years. When Committee members are not able to complete their two-year terms, the Board must approve new members to complete the unexpired terms of the outgoing Committee members.

### **Background:**

During the year, the Committee fulfilled its three-fold purpose through the following activities:

- (1) Advise the Board of Regents on policy matters related to the education of visually-impaired students:
  - ◆ Reviewed the School's strategic plan updates.
  - ◆ Reviewed the School's proposed reorganization plan.
  - ◆ Discussed the need for a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired.
- (2) Advise the superintendent in the development of policy based on current educational research.
  - ◆ Discussed the School's performance indicators.
  - ◆ Discussed the need for the School to conduct student outcomes assessment.

- ◆ Reviewed the report prepared by the Iowa Department of Education regarding the School's compliance with federal and state mandates relating to the education of students with visual disabilities.
- (3) Forge linkages between the Regent universities and the School for research and professional development opportunities.
- ◆ Discussed the need for a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired.

**Analysis:**

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School met twice during the past year. The November 1, 2000 meeting was held at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School with a telephone conference call linkage to facilitate member participation. The January 11, 2000 meeting held over the ICN at sites in Vinton, Iowa City, Ames, Cedar Falls, and Des Moines.

During the Fall 1999 meeting, the following topics were discussed:

- ◆ Superintendent Thurman reviewed the updates to the strategic plan. The School added a new strategy under KRA #1 - Quality and Access in Education. Strategy 1.1.1.4 states "continue to develop comprehensive services to students, in cooperation with area and local education agencies." A key question that was discussed was whether the individual educational plan (IEP) is created first and then the student is placed, or whether it works the other way around. There was general agreement that the IEP is most effective when it is created by those with the most information. Mr. Thurman indicated that the strategic plan is more focused on what the School needs to do to survive and to serve students who are blind or visually impaired. The plan, with its environmental assessment, has been used to develop the School's budget and to provide an overall guide for operations.
- ◆ The Committee discussed the School's performance indicators and suggested that a brief narrative to explain the items would be most helpful to include. This would assist the Board to understand the concepts, including the fact that not every student at the School has a goal in the extended core curriculum. Dr. Macfarlane suggested that it would also be useful for the School to examine the goals that have low accomplishment in light of how the goals are worded and in light of the level of preparation of the staff to teach those areas.

- ◆ Dr. Macfarlane advised the Committee that the Department of Special Education at UNI had been given the responsibility to write a white paper regarding a program to train teachers of visually impaired students. The paper will outline the needs in the State and the current concerns; suggest how UNI could meet the needs; describe best practices; and identify the availability of resources to implement the program.
- ◆ The Committee received a report on the NCA outcomes accreditation. The School has adopted a five-year cycle to prepare for the next phase of accreditation. The School understands that outcomes accreditation is a continuous process that may work better because it is a five-year cycle rather than a seven-year cycle. The School's commitment to community input will take more time to gather meaningful data. The core committee members have been asked to make a commitment to the entire five-year cycle.

During the Spring 2000 meeting, the following issues were discussed:

- ◆ Superintendent Thurman presented the School's proposed reorganization plan. The plan relates to three critical issues: (1) the School's strategic plan which identifies collaborative relationship with the public schools, off-campus programs, short-term programs, and varying needs of students with visual impairments; (2) on-campus enrollment trends for the past five years; and (3) budget requests for Fiscal Year 2001 to sustain excellence identified in the strategic plan, expand outreach services to western Iowa, and improve library services. The major change in the reorganization is the consolidation of center-based and community-based services under the Director of Education. There will be four positions created by the reorganization - the center-based program coordinator, the community-based program coordinator, and two orientation and mobility specialists.
- ◆ Dr. Macfarlane presented a white paper regarding the development of a training program for teachers of the visually impaired. The program would be designed as a graduate program; undergraduate students completing a special education major or minor would be recruited for the program.
- ◆ The Committee discussed the performance indicators that are submitted by the School as part of its progress report to the Board of Regents. One of the key questions addressed by the performance indicators is the level of student learning; therefore, benchmarks need to relate to the accomplishment of pre-identified targets. Superintendent Thurman indicated that the extended core curriculum described in the performance indicators identifies the skills that have been specified for the student in his/her IEP. There was extensive discussion about how the School might conduct student outcomes assessment.

- ◆ The Committee received a copy of the compliance report prepared by the Iowa Department of Education for IBSSS following a review of the School. Mr. Thurman informed the Committee that the citations noted in the report have been addressed by the School.

The Board is asked to receive the report and to approve two-year committee appointments (beginning September 1, 2000 and ending August 31, 2002) for the following individuals:

Dr. Howard L. Barnes (UNI) - Associate Professor and Head - Department of Design, Family, and Consumer Sciences. Dr. Barnes has been nominated to replace Dr. Glenn Hansen who will retire from the University;

Dr. Kathryn C. Gerken (SUI) - Associate Professor of Education;

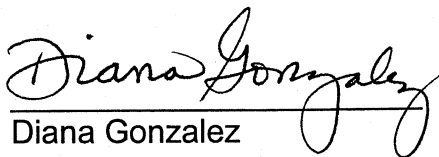
Dr. Mary Jean Sanspree (Consultant) - Research Professor and Director of Low Vision Community Programs, University of Alabama at Birmingham;

Mr. R. Creig Slayton (Consumer) - Director, Iowa Department for the Blind.

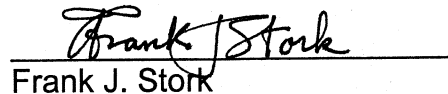
The Board is asked to approve one-year committee appointments (beginning September 1, 2000 and ending August 31, 2001) for the following individuals:

Dr. Patricia L. Sitlington (UNI) - Professor of Special Education. Dr. Sitlington has been nominated to complete the two-year term of Dr. Christine Macfarlane who has resigned from the University;

Dr. Horabail Venkatagiri (ISU) - Associate Professor of Psychology. Dr. Venkatagiri has been nominated to complete the two-year term of Dr. Judy Brun who retired from the University.

  
Diana Gonzalez

Approved:

  
Frank J. Stork