Report to the Iowa Legislature – Education Committee - February 2011

The recommendation of the Board of Regents Study Committee on residential services and facility utilization at Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School

Executive Summary

The Board of Regents formed a study committee pursuant to House File 2531 to "examine possible changes to and make recommendations regarding the current structure for providing residential services on the campus of the Iowa braille and sight saving school and to make recommendations regarding appropriate facilities and facility utilization." House File 2531, 83rd G.A., 2d Sess., 82(1)-(2). The recommendations were acted upon by the Board of Regents in August, 2010 and with full support were submitted by August 31, 2010 to the Legislative Council. H.F. 2531, 82(3). The background, data and rationale for these recommendations are included within the full report.

These recommendations are based on the fact that educational institutions must continually be working to improve and continuing the status quo no longer meets the needs of the majority of students who are blind or visually impaired in Iowa. To do so we are limiting the intensity of services throughout the state requiring families to seek more restrictive placements for their children because they cannot access what they need near their homes or for the students' needs to be under met. The recommendations, with current or increased resources, will allow additional needed services to be put into place closer to families.

The interrelationship of the following recommendations requires a review and consideration of them as a whole and not as an individual stand alone recommendation.

Recommendation 1 – The Iowa Legislature shall continue to appropriate fiscal resources at or above the current level.

Recommendation 2 –The Statewide System for Vision Services shall provide educational services as near to each student's home as possible.

Recommendation 3- The Statewide System for Vision Services shall strengthen the availability of intense services in each region of the state through the reallocation of residential costs using three mechanisms:

1. Employment of additional Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation, Mobility Specialists and Special Education Consultants and others as appropriate;
2. Development and implementation of "Magnet" opportunities in partnership with other providers for the provision of regional intensive expanded core curriculum short term programs;
3. Build capacity, expand visibility, and increase understanding of the Statewide System for Vision Services.

Recommendation 4 The Statewide System for Vision Services shall develop and implement a process for determining and meeting the long term residential needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

Recommendation 5 – The Statewide System for Vision Services shall partner with other providers for the provision of long term residential services for students with additional needs.

Recommendation 6 –The Board of Regents shall continue to operate the Vinton campus for the following operations:

1. Direct Services. A facility will be needed for short term programs for students, e.g., weekend, weeklong, summer in this region of the state and some statewide student short term services. The site will serve as the center for services such as consultation, assistive technology and low vision. (Appendix 6c Service Fact Sheet)
2. Administrative Services. The Vinton site will be used as the center for administrative services with the Statewide System for Vision Services. The site will continue to operate in partnership with AmeriCorps NCCC programs with lease revenue to be used to offset a substantial portion of the costs to operate the facility. This is the beginning of the third year of a five year contract with AmeriCorps and facility utilization should be examined with the end of the five year contract period.

Recommendation 7 –The Board of Regents shall recommend to the legislature the change the of the name of the Statewide System for Vision Services and Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School to Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Fiscal Year	Students Served	Amount	Percent Change
2009	417	$5,720,006	3.1%
2010	414	$4,926,822	-13.9%
2011	415	$4,925,181	-0.03%

Request for 2012 fiscal year – 2% increase in general appropriations