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Broadband Expansion to Benefit Iowa's Public Universities

The University of Iowa and Iowa State University will benefit enormously from the planned expansion of the nation's broadband network announced last week by The White House, university officials and the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, said today.

President Barack Obama announced Friday investment in 66 new American Recovery and Reinvestment Act broadband projects nationwide that are expected to create about

5,000 jobs initially and help spur economic development in some of the nation's hardest-hit communities. The \$795 million in grants and loans through the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Agriculture has been matched by more than \$200 million in outside investment, for a total public-private investment of more than \$1 billion. This includes approximately \$90 million in ARRA

grants and loans coming to Iowa for several broadband Internet projects.

Also included is a \$16.2 million grant for upgrades to the Iowa Communication Network (ICN), a 3,000-mile fiber optic telecommunications network that provides voice, video, data, WAN connections, and Internet service to Iowa K-12 schools, higher education (including the UI and ISU, which use the ICN for outreach activities and online courses), hospitals, state and federal government, National Guard armories and libraries

across Iowa.

As major research universities, ISU and the UI will benefit from a \$62.5 million grant, with an additional \$34.3 million applicant-provided match, which will support the United States Unified Community Anchor Network (U.S. UCAN) project. This project will create a

nationwide, high-capacity network that will enable advanced networking features for more than 100,000 essential community anchor institutions, which include the UI and ISU, through a large-scale, public-private partnership of more than 30 existing, intercon-

ected research and education networks. One of the networks is the Broadband Optical Research, Education and Sciences Network (or BOREAS), a collaboration of four major research institutions in the upper Midwest that includes the UI and ISU.

Board of Regents President David Miles expressed his appreciation for the ARRA funding. "We are proud to be a beneficiary of this major investment which will advance our technologies for the state and further enhance the contributions of Iowa's public universities to Iowans. I

the council accepted the pro





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am grateful for the strong inter-institutional collaboration that has made this funding possible and which will contribute to the success of this effort going forward.”

UI Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer Steve Fleagle said the ARRA funding would be used to increase the network’s capacity tenfold, which will go a long way toward enabling inter-institutional research collaboration improving the quality and reach of videoconferencing and distance education classes, professional training and other services offered by and through the UI and ISU.

Among other things, the improvements will allow U.S. UCAN to support the delivery of life-changing applications such as telemedicine and distance learning to all community anchor institutions, including those in areas previously considered too remote or economically depressed to support advanced network services.

“The more places that connect to a network, the more valuable the network is to everyone,” Fleagle said. “By integrating BOREAS into the upgraded national network, not only

will researchers and hospitals be able to collaborate and share data more easily, they’ll be able to do it faster than ever before.”

ISU Vice Provost for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Jim Davis agreed.

“The planned improvements in speed effectively eliminate distance as a barrier to sharing expensive laboratory or computing equipment,” Davis said. “For example, scientists could connect a virtual reality facility at one university to a supercomputer located elsewhere and share enormous amounts of data as though they were in the same laboratory.”