Transforming Higher Education

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High-speed connectivity, or broadband, has the potential to transform higher education in MIssouri by:

- easing classroom overcrowding when traditional on-site classes fill up, allowing students to access popular core classes without losing time as they are working towards a degree;
- enabling students who cannot attend class to access digitally captured lectures;
- enabling students to collaborate on a shared virtual "blackboard" -- integrating social media tools, videos, chat rooms in conjunction with course curriculum and other class resources;
- enabling videoconferencing that allows colleges to serve several branch campuses simultaneously.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Plan

The FCC's National Broadband Plan includes goals for our education system. These goals serve as a starting point for regional discussions about the best way to deliver and use broadband technology to transform higher education in Missouri. The Plan's recommendations include:

"All levels of the education continuum, including primary, secondary, post-secondary, home-schooling, and continuing education programs, stand to gain incredible opportunities. High speed connectivity offers the promise of remote class instruction, shared course offerings, and faculty and administrators networking with peers."

Modernize broadband infrastructure to support 21st century teaching and learning

While universities and colleges in Missouri have access to broadband, going forward we need to ensure that the networks that support higher education are robust and designed to have room to grow. Higher education is the home of entrepreneurial research centers that can move our state in a positive direction. Responsive broadband networks for data collection and other higher education needs are a necessity.

Expand access to broadband with common sense reforms

Communities are best served when schools and libraries leverage their technology resources. Wireless educational options that can serve students wherever they are and offering schools and libraries the choice to purchase their area's low-cost broadband option are changes

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to E-rate that the FCC's plan recommends. Giving schools the option of opening up access to their networks after class instruction, for other programs like continuing education will enable more Missouri residents to be served without an additional cost.

Improve access to high-quality, online instruction

Faculty and students will benefit from high quality online learning solutions. Advancements in online learning require research and development of online learning systems, including creating online course material and ways to share it (such as making it easier to share materials across different colleges and universities). It is widely held that many students learn best when instruction is personalized to meet their individual learning needs, and online learning can help faculty provide this.

Unlock the power of educational data

To make properly informed decisions that will improve education, all stakeholders -- faculty, students and administrators -- need to be able to quickly access correct, current educational data. Broadband will put the data that faculty need to help students succeed at their fingertips.

How can Broadband Transform Higher Education in my area?

Several other factors need to be considered along with implementing broadband technology. Are the right tools in place for faculty and students to leverage broadband? Do current processes and procedures allow enough flexibility for use of broadband? Are faculty and students properly trained to use the technology effectively?

MoBroadbandNow, a five-year initiative launched by Gov. Nixon in 2009, coordinates efforts to obtain funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Commerce specifically set aside for broadband expansion. *MoBroadbandNow* seeks to expand broadband accessibility to 95 percent of the total population, a significant increase from the current projected accessibility of 79.7 percent.

MoBroadbandNow can provide education, awareness, and facilitate communication of funding opportunities for higher education.

But, we also need to have a fuller understanding of how higher education interests would like to use broadband, and what are the barriers and challenges to integration?

Please share your stories with us at: http://transform.mo.gov/broadband/

Follow us on Twitter -- @MoBroadbandNow -- to stay up to speed on broadband news, program activities and funding opportunities.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS ...

Although online learning is indeed to be done at a student's home (at least not on a campus), a number of students who live in areas in Central Missouri that do not currently have connections...or reliable connections...at their homes, actually travel back to the campus in order to take their online classes in one of our computer labs! **-Marianne Inman, Ph.D., President, Central Methodist Univ.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION AND BROADBAND

1. Are the right tools in place for faculty and students to leverage broadband? If yes, what tools are in place? If not, what hardware, software and other equipment do you need? Can you provide examples of how it would improve today's higher education?

2. Do current processes and procedures encourage the use of broadband? What could you do differently with broadband that would promote its use in higher education?

3. Is everyone properly trained to use broadband technology effectively? How can we better prepare the faculty and students to utilize broadband to its maximum benefit?

4. Does broadband access and availability meet the minimum standards needed to facilitate effective higher education applications? If yes, how? If not, what are the locations that need broadband enhancements and the challenges in getting it there?

5. Is broadband technology cost prohibitive? If so, what are some cost-saving measures that could be implemented to increase use?

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