

NEWS RELEASE

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Information highway coming to rural Nevada

Rural Nevada soon will become part of the massive "information highway" available via computer through an infusion of high tech communication equipment from a \$400,000 federal grant to the state university system.

A student enters a classroom at Northern Nevada Community College in Elko. A handful of other students are seated at desks preparing their notes for the day. "Good morning, class," the professor says. "We'll begin with an oral quiz on last week's material and move on to a discussion of the reading in chapter 10 and 11. Any questions?" A student raises his hand, "How much will this quiz count toward our final grade?" he asks.

Not an unusual beginning to a college class except that the professor is speaking from his office at the University of Nevada campus in Reno and students at NNCC are watching him on a computer screen in a SMART Classroom. This is one of the ways the federal grant money awarded to Nevada will enhance education.

The funding award, made to a consortium of the University of Nevada School of Medicine, University of Nevada, Reno, Northern Nevada Community College and the Nevada Rural Hospital Project, is designed to increase the technology available for distance education, according to Dr. Bob Hoover, vice president for academic affairs at UNR and the administrator of the project. Nearly 180 organizations applied for the \$10 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Distance Learning and Medical Link Program. Nevada's project was

one of 28 awards and one of the largest funded.

Specific equipment will include:

- audio conferencing equipment;
- computer systems to allow teachers and students to communicate simultaneously;
- InterNet connections via computer to hook rural communities to a nationwide network of libraries and information resources;
- compressed video systems to allow two-way visual and audio communication between students and teachers; and
- satellite downlink sites are planned for each community.

Proposed rural communities which will be receiving the equipment include Battle Mountain, Beatty, Caliente, Elko, Ely, Eureka, Hawthorne, Jackpot, Lovelock, McDermitt, Owyhee, Tonopah, Wells, West Wendover, Winnemucca and Yerington. Communities will receive different levels of the equipment, depending on existing resources.

The consortium-based project will be coordinated through the university and community college system. This consortium is providing more than \$250,000 in matching funds, equipment and facilities for the project.

Dr. Robert Daugherty, dean of the medical school, said the opportunities for medical education are exciting. "This brings state-of-the-art communication equipment to rural communities," he said. "Rural Nevada students and medical professionals can now take full advantage of all the exciting ways to provide education via computer and satellite equipment." The Nevada Rural Hospital Project plans to use the technology to enhance rural hospitals' abilities for consultation and education. Northern Nevada Community College offers several distance learning programs now and will be able to expand those offerings. "The equipment grant allows us a variety of technologies to deliver a broad spectrum of our programs and to link small groups of students in the remote educational centers to the main campuses of the UCCSN," said Bill Binaudi, vice-president for academic services at NNCC.

Nevada Bell will also be involved in the project and is credited with bringing the grant

proposal to the attention of the university, according to Dr. Hoover.

Equipment ordering is now underway and installation in communities is expected to begin by early spring and continue through most of 1994.

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The following communities are proposed to receive the following equipment:

Elko: audio-conferencing equipment and compressed video system

Wendover: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Wells: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Jackpot: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Owyhee: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Ely: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; compressed video system; and a satellite receiver.

Caliente: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Beatty: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Tonopah: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; compressed video system; and a satellite receiver.

Hawthorne: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Yerington: audio-conferencing equipment and computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student.

Lovelock: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Eureka: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Battle Mountain: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Winnemucca: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; compressed video system; and a satellite receiver.

McDermitt: audio-conferencing equipment; computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; and a satellite receiver.

Reno: computer equipment to allow simultaneous communication between teacher and student; a computer network; and a satellite receiver.