



Office of the President

March 22, 2010

The Honorable Larry Strickling
Assistant Secretary of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

I am writing to you today on behalf of Plymouth State University and the University System of New Hampshire to express my support for "Network New Hampshire Now" (#4248), a statewide broadband proposal submitted by the University of New Hampshire to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) Round 2 program.

Plymouth State University is the northern-most public university in New Hampshire and has a special commitment to the North Country. Coös County, New Hampshire's northern county, in particular, has been hit hard in recent years by the closing of two of its major economic drivers. It has the highest unemployment rate (9.8%) of all counties in New Hampshire, and thousands of its residents are in need of re-tooling through continuing education efforts. As a regional comprehensive university, Plymouth State University works to meet these needs.

Although Coös County is the largest county in New Hampshire, making up 21% of New Hampshire's land area, it holds only 2.4% (32,000) of New Hampshire's residents. Serving the educational needs of a population that is so dispersed geographically is challenging.

One of the most cost-effective ways to provide educational opportunities would be through the use of technology-mediated education. These rural communities, however, are severely impacted by a current lack of broadband connectivity. A robust broadband infrastructure is critical to their future economic growth. Providing job retraining and assisting in the development of new economies is extremely difficult in the absence of high-speed internet capabilities. Broadband access in these rural communities could be transformative to their futures, bringing together education, healthcare, and public safety partners to work on behalf of the region. The Network New Hampshire Now Project has the potential to stimulate economic development, and allow institutions of higher education like Plymouth State University to better serve the educational needs of the population.

We strongly support this project and look forward to the service and growth its completion will provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Jayne Steen".

Sara Jayne Steen
President