

## **Higher Education's Perspective on Telecommunications Reform**

Americans depend on the Internet to learn, create, work, conduct business and communicate. This "central nervous system of the information economy" directly enables innovation, productivity, and economic growth. How it expands and develops will significantly affect the economic well-being of our nation.

The advanced networks operating on campuses today showcase future benefits for all Americans, particularly in the areas of education, health care, and public safety. Spreading these capabilities throughout society will require a visionary telecommunications policy from our nation's leaders.

We encourage Congress to observe the following principles when re-formulating telecommunications law:

- The United States should adopt as a national goal a broadband Internet that is secure, affordable, and available to all, supporting two-way, gigabit-per-second speeds and beyond.
- All components of the public broadband Internet must remain open to all persons, all applications, and all lawful content. All components must interconnect and interoperate using freely available, international standards.
- Telecommunications policy must ensure a level playing field for competing technologies so that market forces can drive continued innovation and affordable access.
- State and local governments must have the right to build and deploy their own public, broadband networks to enable full participation of all citizens in Internet-based higher education, workforce development, and telemedicine.
- The federal government must renew its leading role in funding academic research and development in future Internet technologies and applications in order for America to enjoy the full benefits of the broadband revolution and to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

We appreciate the difficult task before Congress as it considers the future of the Telecommunications Act. Colleges and universities have been leaders in the development of the Internet and continue to work hard on these issues. We encourage policymakers to take advantage of our experience and expertise as a resource.