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Docket No. 00-258

VIDEO SERVICES DIVISION

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT WILMINGTON

February 26, 2001

JAMES R. LEUTZE
Chancellor

Federal Communications Commission
Attention: Roy Stewart, Chief,
Mass Media Bureau, Room 2-C334
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Chief Stewart:

The digital divide is more than a slogan; it is real. Those of us who serve large areas of rural North Carolina recognize the potential reality of an urban and rural state and the powerful educational implications of such a dichotomy. Clearly, access to superior ITFS frequencies is a crucial piece of how we will overcome the digital divide and bring new opportunities to the children, workers and families of those who choose to live in the rural south.

Some are now arguing that educational users of wireless networks can simply move to new frequencies in order to make room for an expanding cellular, handheld market. While simple and appealing in its surface logic, such an argument is at best misleading. To accept this argument one would have to agree to stall efforts to deliver quality education services at a distance and reverse years of hard work by the North Carolina Community College System, their private partners and others in the public school and higher education community who are now on the verge of activating a seamless, wireless educational network. The envisioned network would provide a degree of access and flexibility unavailable in many areas of the state through land networks.

Congress has, through the lease back system, positioned North Carolina to complete a wireless network that has been in the conceptual and planning stages for over seven years. It would be counter to the vision of so many in Congress and leaders here at home to lose the crucial link to such a vision, superior ITFS spectrum frequencies.

As Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and Chairman of the Rural Internet Access Authority, I have experienced first hand the impact of inequities in educational opportunity across our great state. I know all to well the struggle faced by students who have limited access to advanced programs in math and science, not to mention basic programs. For these reasons, I join my colleagues in the North Carolina Community College System to oppose the proposal to reallocate ITFS frequencies to commercial use to support 3G devices and I ask for your thoughtful consideration of our request to preserve access by educational entities.

Most Sincerely,

Jim Leutze

Cc: Barbara Kreisman, Chief, Video Services Division,
Mass Media Bureau, Room 2-A666

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