December 6, 2005

The Honorable Rick Boucher
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 200515

Dear Congressman Boucher:

EDUCAUSE and our higher education association partners wish to commend you on your efforts to ensure all Americans have affordable access to broadband services.

Your discussion draft of the “Universal Service Reform Act of 2005” sets the right direction by encouraging investment in the deployment of broadband services in rural areas. It is imperative that we adjust universal service funding towards facilitating the technologies of the future, rather than the maintenance of legacy systems.

The higher education community currently relies on a robust broadband networks with minimum speeds of 100 megabits up to a gigabit. These networks run applications that foster learning and cutting-edge research that stimulate our nation’s economic growth. We applaud the establishment of benchmarks for USF recipients to deploy minimum speeds within a designated period of time and that require the Federal Communications Commission to review the speed threshold every two years. While a minimum broadband download speed standard of 1 megabit in one direction is an improvement over the antiquated FCC standard, we encourage you to establish higher bandwidth speeds of 100 megabits in both directions as a minimum goal. A higher threshold will effectuate our shared vision that all American citizens have the power to access information and run advanced applications similar to those available to university students today.

Your discussion draft can be the catalyst for making this vision a reality. EDUCAUSE is prepared to work with your staff to garner the support needed to craft this into legislation. For further discussion, you and your staff may contact me through Wendy Wigen at wwigen@educause.edu.

Again, allow me to convey the appreciation of EDUCAUSE and our partners for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Mark Luker
Vice President, EDUCAUSE