

Wyoming Community College Commission

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January 7, 2002

Representative Randall Luthi, Chairman
Management Audit Committee

Dear Representative Luthi:

This letter provides a joint response to the revised LSO Report Draft on Wyoming Public Television on behalf of the Wyoming Community College Commission, Central Wyoming College, and Wyoming Public Television.

We believe that the revised draft report is fair and accurate in most respects. We appreciate the professionalism and dedication of the LSO staff members who gathered the information and wrote the report and their willingness to work cooperatively with us throughout the process. We agree that the LSO did a very good job covering the issues, capturing the essence of the system, and pointing out the challenges that Wyoming Public Television faces in the future.

We do, however, have some comments that we believe will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the report, and we respectfully request that this response be included with the report when it is released to the public.

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In reference to WPTV goals adopted by the College Commission in 1996, although it may be true that the College Commission cannot unilaterally alter these goals, it is also true that CWC and the College Commission are deeply and jointly committed to carrying out these goals, which were developed over several months and numerous meetings and which were officially adopted by the College Commission as a separate action item at one of its regular public meetings. CWC and WPTV recognize the benefit of having College Commission support of this important state program, not only because the College Commission requests funding for WPTV in its budget request, but also because WPTV is closely aligned with the mission of community colleges to provide educational access to the citizens of the state; to provide distance education; to provide adult basic education; and to provide educational community services offerings through outreach to the entire state.

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In the rare instances that WPTV has used its production resources to produce classes for CWC (as was the case four years ago when WPTV taped short course segments for several Star Schools courses), WPTV has been fully compensated for such work according to their published rate schedule. In addition, it should be noted that CWC broadcasting students provide needed staffing for WPTV operations, saving WPTV considerable sums in staffing costs, while at the same time providing valuable laboratory experience for the students.

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Status Quo with an Updated MOU

We agree with the option of directing the College Commission to work with CWC to update its Memorandum of Understanding with regard to Wyoming Public Television.

Status Quo with Authorization in Statute

We believe that the state should continue its financial support and even increase it to reflect the commitment it has to education, local cultural interests, and the citizenship of the state. This tremendous resource can be of great value to not only the citizens of Wyoming, but also to students, teachers, state agencies, business, and government. With the proper vision, planning, and financial support, full digital services will provide many additional opportunities for the state. We hope that the Legislature will recognize the potential and take a proactive approach to maintaining and enhancing Wyoming Public Television.

Status Quo with Legislative Intent

We are neutral about legislative intent language in statute, as long as the Legislature does not interfere with editorial and programming decisions.

Options for Governance Require Careful Study

We agree that a study to identify the best arrangement for the network and service to the citizens of Wyoming needs to be commissioned, only if the Legislature considers a governance change.

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In addition to the potential loss of \$400,000 per biennium in-kind support from CWC, a governance change for WPTV could entail literally millions of dollars for additional staffing, equipment, studio, transmission infrastructure, and wiring, especially if a physical move is made as well.

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We agree that the Legislature should request that CWC and the Wyoming Community College Commission develop a plan that allows for wider participation in WPTV governance. Although not at all apparent in the audit report, CWC and the College Commission jointly recognize the need for WPTV to serve the needs of the state as a whole. WPTV and the College Commission missions are compatible in that both seek to provide educational access throughout the state. The College Commission has recognized WPTV as a separate statewide program, apart from CWC, in that WPTV makes a separate report at each College Commission meeting. In addition, WPTV General Manager has been invited to some Executive Council meetings. Also, the new General Manager was selected by a statewide committee, with representation by the College Commission and the general public.

We appreciate the interest shown in WPTV as demonstrated by the authorization of this management audit. We look forward to working with the Legislature and other state entities to plan for WPTV's future.

Sincerely,

Ed Jolovich, WCCC Chair

Dr. Bruce Snyder, WCCC Executive Director

Dr. Jo Anne McFarland, CWC President

Dan Schiedel, WPTV General Manager

