I. INTRODUCTIONS

The August 18, 1999, meeting of the Education Telecommunications Council was held at Iowa Public Television and the following members were present: Al Bode (ISEA); Mary Jane Vens for Dean Borg (IASB); Paul Bowers (IAICU); Susan Donovan (IASB); Gene Gardner (IACCT); Gary Hayden (AEA Boards); Ellen Kabat (IACCT alternate); Kathryn O'Shaughnessy (ISEA); Pam Pfitzenmaier (IPTV); Kay Rung (DE/Libraries); Mary Travillian (AEA Boards); Wayne Prophet for Emmett Vaughan (Regents) and Rich Gross (DE/Exofficio). Bob Barak (Regents); John Hartung (IAICU); Connie Maxson (SAI); David Montgomery (DE/CIANS); and Gail Sullivan (DE) were absent. The following guests were also present at this meeting: John Haack and Wendell Maakestad (RTC 10); Ken Colwell (St. Ambrose Univ.); Dick Ploeger (AEA 6); Colette Scott (RTC 4); Darlas Shockley (RTC 15); Dennis Eitmann (RTC 13); Marlene McComas (RTC 5); Karen Lombard (RTC 5); Chuck Chrisman (RTC 16); Kitty Conover (RTC 3); Rick Maehl (RTC 5); Winston Black (RTC 11); Kathy Guilgot (RTC 1); Roger Rezabek (RTC 7); Stacy Rockhold and Julie Burrell (RTC 14); Tommy Thompson, Kathy Williams, and Mike Bacino (ICN); Dick Opie and Mary Nelson (ITTC); Tony Crandell, Lynee Klaus (RTC 11); Kathy Borlin and Debbie Fiscus (IPTV).

II. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

With the help of his colleagues at UNI, the ETC members recognized the retirement of Dr. Robert Hardman with a presentation of a framed certificate and an album of "Best Wishes" submitted by colleagues and friends. Bob highlighted his career in distance learning and his role as one of the pioneers in the birth of the ICN.

III. ISSUES

III-1. ICN Issues Update: Summary of ETC/RTC Concerns

Pam summarized the issues of concern voiced by ETC members, RTCs, educational schedulers, and end users. Communication was identified as a priority as it relates to the VOSS scheduling and switching software. Two issues that were discussed: a). Make sure the scheduling software is working as expected and b). Ensure that video sessions operate effectively and efficiently. There was an in-depth discussion that followed.

A third concern was the Internet price increase. Members recommended that a timeline be established by the ITTC comparable to that used for video rate increases. This would allow those authorized users affected by price changes to incorporate any increase into their future budget plans.

The fourth issue of concern was the MPEG-2 conversion and the questions about performance. It was recognized that there may be some functionality differences in ICN video classrooms when MPEG-2 is implemented. Members discussed that it is important that the impact of this conversion be communicated to the schedulers and users--what can be
expected when the conversion is implemented. ETC members expressed a desire to work closely with the ICN to make this conversion as effective as possible. It was suggested that a group consisting of some members of the ETC, RTCs, schedulers, and end users participate in the testing of the new technology before it is fully deployed. Discussion followed.

The fifth issue was the Memorandum of Understanding that was submitted last spring to Tommy Thompson and the ITTC. The next steps relating to this document still need to be determined.

The sixth issue was overall communication. The ETC proposed to the ICN and ITTC that a more regular communication process be put in place—a system or set of protocols that will facilitate improved interaction among end users, schedulers, etc.

III.2. Discussion with any ITTC Members in Attendance

Dick Opie and Mary Nelson of the ITTC were in attendance at this meeting and were able to listen to the concerns voiced by the ETC, RTCs, and schedulers. Mr. Opie concurred with the opinion that a more regular communication process be established between the ETC/RTCs and the ICN staff so that issues are communicated and dealt with in a timely manner. He further stated that if the ICN end user isn't satisfied with services, then the ITTC needs to know about it.

Mary Nelson agreed that communication is a major problem that needs to be corrected soon. Further, Mrs. Nelson requested that data be collected and analyzed concerning problems with the VOSS scheduling software. Both ITTC members agreed that a "core group" be pulled together consisting of ETC and RTC representatives, ICN staff and ITTC representation to fully air issues of concern and to facilitate the lines of communication. Discussion followed.

III.3. Update from ICN Staff

Tommy Thompson responded to the discussion about ICN issues and highlighted some of the operational problems that have been occurring in the scheduling and switching software. He also discussed the Internet rate increase. Kathy Williams updated the members concerning the VOSS scheduling software and reported that there are meetings scheduled twice weekly via the ICN with the educational schedulers to keep them apprised of software changes/corrections.

III.4. Recommendations and Next Steps

It was agreed that the weekly scheduler/ICN staff meetings will continue. To address the communication issue, a meeting will be scheduled with a "core group" consisting of some members of ETC, RTC, schedulers, ICN staff, and ITTC members to further discuss the above issues and determine next steps.

IV. UPDATES
IV.1. Transition Team

Rich Varn provided an update on the Information Technology Transition Team activities. A consultant has been retained to assist the Transition Team in their work. The names of the ETC and RTC members have been forwarded to the consultants. It was expected that several of the members would be contacted for input concerning future development of the ICN, ITS and IPTV as separate or collaborative state agencies.

IV.2. E-Rate Information

Pam updated members concerning the Year 2 and Year 3 of the E-rate application process.

IV.3. Statenet Project

Rich Gross informed members about the Statewide Networks Mega test to be held in September. Six state and regional networks will participate in a test to interconnect their networks. States expected to participate: Iowa, Nebraska, Washington, Mississippi, Minnesota, Kentucky.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The August 18, 1999, meeting of the Education Telecommunications Council adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next meeting of the ETC will be September 23, 1999, at Iowa Public Television.