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Oct 23, 2006 3:34 pm US/Pacific

## New Broadband Connection To Help Distance Learning

(AP) PALM DESERT State and local leaders celebrated Monday a new \$3.4 million, 400-mile broadband connection between the Coachella Valley and the California Research & Education Network and said it will help train hundreds of students.

The connection will provide area colleges with the "ability to train hundreds of future teachers, nurses and entrepreneurs through distance learning," according to an announcement from the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California.

The announcement was made during a news conference at the Palm Desert Campus of California State University San Bernardino with Palm Desert Mayor Jim Ferguson. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell participated in the news conference via video-conference. The connection was paid for with a grant from the H.N. & Frances C. Berger Foundation.

"This vital project will help close the digital divide that has too often cut off Inland Empire educational and research institutions from the rest of the state," said O'Connell. "Connecting Coachella Valley to the California Research and Education Network will help make the desert a center of educational innovation and allow us to train hundreds of new teachers and nurses for the future."

Mayor Ferguson said the connection would "allow educators and students to reach anywhere in the world with lightning speed."

Among the immediate beneficiaries is the Palm Desert Campus of Cal State San Bernardino, where the nursing school plans to use the network for upcoming classes.

"We are extremely excited that the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives and California Research and Education Network are such a huge part of the growth of the RN-BSN program at the Palm Desert Campus," Donna Rane-Szostak, campus nursing coordinator said.

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