



Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center
202 S. Broadway Avenue Suite 100
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To Whom It May Concern:

The Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center (UCIMC) supports the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's UC2B Proposal to establish broadband access to bridge the digital divide, grow broadband adoption, and provide outreach and training to the most underserved residents in our community.

Founded in 2000, the UCIMC's mission is to foster the creation and distribution of media and art emphasizing underrepresented voices and perspectives and to promote empowerment and expression through media and arts education. To this end, the UCIMC owns and operates 30,000 square foot a Community Media and Arts Center in the center of downtown Urbana. Our center houses a community radio station, performance space where performers can broadcast live and over radio and internet, media production and training facility with media equipment for check out, an art gallery, and a numerous artist studio and teaching spaces.

The UCIMC is a volunteer based organization with 1200 active volunteers logging 61,250 hours and serving 65 organizations and 284,002 members of the public in 2008. UCIMC provides free community web hosting and listservs to 204 organizations, such as the Volunteer Illini and Red Cross. Our programs serve a variety of ages, and are targeted towards populations underrepresented in the media such as African-Americans, Latinos, new Americans, youth, and the working poor. Our center is open to the public. All of our services are on a donation-only basis.

Some of our recent projects involve designing a computer training facility for the Boys and Girls Club and a media training program at Ready Drop Out Prevention Program, and hosting an Indy Media and Arts Lab for Youth.

UCIMC developed CUWiN (cuwireless.net), an internationally recognized leader in open source mesh network software. Our team deployed the first wifi network in Champaign-Urbana as well as places such as rural Homer, Illinois, the tribal lands of the Mesa Grande Reservation, and the townships of South Africa.

This project will boost the capacity of the UCIMC to serve area organizations and members of the public as one of the community's technology center hubs. With BTOP support, the UCIMC will be able to greatly expand the number of people we serve. The

UCIMC currently serves 16 computers, 22 offices, 78 websites, and 204 listservs off of a single cable connection! No additional services can be provided and the current ones are in jeopardy without additional broadband.

We will upgrade our media production lab, establish a fully functional public access computer lab, and provide community web hosting and listservs to many more organizations.

Champaign-Urbana has been a model of community involvement in the application process. UCIMC and other CTC's have participated in the creation of and served on the Broadband Access Committee, which held 3 well attended public forums to educate the public on broadband opportunities and gather input for the application. We created 6 writing teams, tapping the expertise of the community in areas such as job creation, public access computing, and network operations.

CUOpenAccess.org was formed as a coalition of community partners. These partners put dozens of foot soldiers put on the street to collect over 500 surveys on broadband needs. Over a dozen radio shows on broadband access have been produced. And the community is jazzed about the possibilities opened up by a community owned and controlled network.

Adelante!

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