



*“My parents were always philosophizing  
about how to bring about change.  
To me, people who didn’t try to make  
the world a better place were strange.”*  
C.M. Braun

Dean John Unsworth  
Graduate School of Library and Information Science  
501 E. Daniel  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, IL 61820

March 5, 2010

Dear Dean Unsworth,

I am pleased to write to you in support of our community’s application for broadband access, education and development funding. As a community-based African American women’s network, we are particularly excited about the opportunity to work with you toward technological parity and expression at a time when “the least of us” might expect to be left in the dust.

**SisterNet** is a network of African American women committed to nurturing healthy lifestyles and community activism. We have envisioned a model for Black women’s organizing dedicated to creating wholeness and balance through physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual health. We see our efforts as an essential part of a political strategy to resist oppression and shape livable communities.

The promise of access to state of the art technology and training to identify and create content reflective of our culture and priorities is critical in this time of grave health disparities. Consider:

- African American women are 2.2 times more likely to die from breast cancer than European American women, though the latter develop the disease at a much higher rate
- African American women are disproportionately at risk for and affected by cardiovascular disease (CVD) and Type II diabetes, experiencing 2 times the rate of European American women

- African American women have been found to have the highest rates of physical inactivity and suffer overweight or obesity at the alarming rate of 77%—a major contributing factor for excess morbidity and mortality from CVD, diabetes, hypertension, and multiple cancers

These realities are particularly poignant given another set of related socioeconomic realities:

- African Americans comprise 13.4% of the population, yet make up 24.7% of impoverished households
- 53% of African American children live in single mother households
- Confronting the chronic stressors of racism, sexism, and classism increases African American women's risk for mental and physical disorders

Given African American women's central role in the organization of family life and community engagement, we believe a marked improvement in our health and quality of life will be a key determinant in reversing other major ills crippling the African American community as a whole, such as high rates of academic underachievement and school dropout, under-employment and unemployment, and dreaded HIV infection.

UC2B's and our federal government's commitment to empowering vulnerable populations such as ours cannot come at a more important time. We stand ready to work with you in this comprehensive effort to reach, teach, and facilitate community growth and change. We are committed to remaining informed and engaged in the progress of this initiative.

Yours truly,

Imani Bazzell, Director