



University Emergency Medical Services

"Choose your emergency department as if your life depends on it!"

September 27, 2001

Evaluation Committee
21st Century Fund
c/o Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
712 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Evaluation Committee,

It is with great excitement that I write this letter of support for the proposal by the Partnership for Regional Internetworking to the 21st Century Fund of the Community Foundation of Buffalo to establish the **21st Century Regional Internetworking Center**. As the Director for Telemedicine Services at the Erie County Medical Center and an Assistant Professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine, I have been keenly aware of the potential benefit to our community that is high bandwidth fiber-optic networks and community internetworking centers.

The Department of Emergency Medicine at ECMC has been involved with digital videoconferencing since July 1994 when we established the first personal computer-based telemedicine system in the world between the Medical Center and the Erie County Holding Center in downtown Buffalo. Subsequent emergency telemedicine applications included services to long-term correctional facilities and a rural emergency department and has grown to comprise a network of 34 facilities across New York State from Ogdensburg to Elmira to Staten Island. The Telemedicine Program at ECMC currently manages nearly 200 emergency consultations a month throughout the state along with telemedicine clinics in Gastroenterology, Neurology, Infectious Diseases/HIV, Dermatology, Rheumatology, Hand Surgery, Endocrinology, and Psychiatry. We currently conduct state- and nation-wide Distance Learning Grand Rounds presenting state-of-the-art medical education to medical audiences through the UB-Veridian Center for Transportation Injury Research and our relationship with the New York State Department of Correctional Services.

The Partnership for Regional Internetworking began in 1995 as the Western New York High Performance Network Video Initiative. Its founder, James Whitlock, a leading expert on network video technologies and recipient of the 2001 University at Buffalo Chancellor's Award has focused on the creation of shared community video resources available to the non-profit sector of education, healthcare and government services. Conceptually, the PRI was formed as each member organization faced the realization of duplicative and highly specialized technical equipment and support services associated with their video applications. Furthermore, individual organization's network efforts were creating a "balkanized" system of local area networks with small, low speed pipes connecting one to another.

The **21st Century Regional Internetworking Center** is a high profile, achievable component of this developing community fiber infrastructure. Support from the 21st Century Fund of the Community Foundation of Buffalo will establish community owned



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services. Of particular note to me is the great benefit this project will have on the developing Buffalo-Niagara downtown medical corridor and the emerging Biotechnology Centers.

The "dream" of connecting these varied networks using a high bandwidth "dark fiber"-optical corridor and allowing video applications to flow seamlessly between the individual members of these networks has been demonstrated as a reality in other communities around the world. Numerous projects in Canada and here in the US in Chicago, IL and Blacksburg, VA have demonstrated the personal and economic business benefit of this community investment in its telecommunications infrastructure. "Fiber equals Jobs" and community ownership of fiber is the favored short and long-term solution that frees each organization from the monopolies of telecommunications vendors who own the paths to schools, universities, healthcare facilities and government buildings. Just the provision of phone services alone and the ability to seek the most competitive telecommunications services vendors independent of the physical network connection can clinch the cost benefit argument for most participants in the community fiber network.

I offer my support for this extremely worthwhile and practical demonstration of community-based network video management resources. Successful completion of this project will place the Buffalo-Niagara region and all of western New York in a state- and nation-wide leadership position for collaborative broadband video technologies.

Sincerely,

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