

Western New York High Performance Networked Video Initiative

September 29, 2001

Evaluation Committee
21st Century Fund
C/O Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
712 Main Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for The BISSNET/WNYPRI Proposal

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a Letter of Support for the BISSNET/WNYPRI proposal to establish a regional video conferencing center at the University of Buffalo intended to support public benefit applications in education, healthcare and government service.

I direct a public service effort to support early adopters of emerging high performance networked video technologies (H.323 videoconferencing and MPEG I-II streaming video) in the same sectors. These technologies promise ubiquitous medical/business quality visual and visceral connectivity that will enable dramatic public service improvements at reduced costs to our region and, most importantly, to our underserved and remote communities.

The University at Buffalo directly supports this effort, the Western New York High Performance Networked Video Initiative (WNY-HPNVI), with approximately \$150,000 per year in baseline budget, staff, and facilities. We maintain and operate a constantly evolving trial and developmental public infrastructure collection, our Sandbox, valued at over \$75,000. UB's contributions are supplemented by contributions from a growing list of participating institutions and business partners including the Erie County Medical Center, KALEIDA Healthcare Hospital Group, Cisco Corporation, Veraview, and ViewCommunications. We now count over 85 supporting members spanning more than 20 regional institutions, government offices and businesses. Our single-minded mission is to provide technical support and guidance to early adopters of emerging high performance networked video technology.

The WNY-HPNVI provides third-tier technical support and guidance, assistance with network and deployment planning, access to and training on the use of diagnostic tools, access to expensive and complex program trial and developmental infrastructure resources (Gateways, Gatekeepers, MCU's, development systems), reproducible and successful system design models, periodic demonstrations and evaluations of emerging high performance networked video technology in education, telemedicine and government service contexts and a regional forum for information exchange and practical solution development among early adopters. These services are provided at no charge to regional education, healthcare, government and community organizations.

A standing vision within the regional early adopter community for years now has been a shared production support facility for high performance networked video technologies that might overcome some of the support complexity and expense barriers in the way of the most compellingly beneficial public

sector applications. It goes without saying that the WNYPRI facility, if funded, will enjoy the full support of WNY-HPNVI staff resources, as well as access to and use of all WNY-HPNVI trial and developmental facilities.

I have attached a separate Letter of Intent to Support the WNYPRI. As long as support continues for the WNY-HPNVI, the WNYPRI can count on a minimum of 30% of our allocable staff and facility resources. In fact, our objectives are the same and I expect the WNYPRI to accrue benefit from virtually all of our various efforts. The WNY-HPNVI will continue to try to illuminate the potholes in the road ahead and to support and encourage trials and forums wherein the best regional thinking can develop practical solutions. As the evidence at our Web site at <http://wny-hpnvi.buffalo.edu/wny-hpnvi> suggests, our collective track record has been excellent to date. WNY enjoys a modest reputation in the small but rapidly growing global R&E community of early adopters.

I believe that the proposed facility will enable the first of many practical public benefit applications in our region for emerging high quality Internet video technologies. The earliest applications are likely to be in telemedicine, medical education, and K-12 school programs. The WNY-HPNVI has been conducting trials and developing support models for multi-institutional deployments in those areas for several years and the most serious immediate impediment to early practical deployments is the absence of the production-grade support infrastructure that the WNYPRI proposal would provide.

Once the more compelling early applications have polished and demonstrated the support infrastructure and its new capabilities, many other applications now in discussion will quickly emerge as endpoint technology costs continue to decline and as the regional inter-networking fabric is improved. These applications, in turn, will reduce costs for public sector services, improve the quality of life in the region and contribute to its attractiveness as a place to conduct business, to work and to live. They will also pave the way for commercial development and exploitation of the same technologies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide supporting information and comments. I look forward to working with you and the WNYPRI on this exciting and richly promising project.

Sincerely,

James O'Connor Whitlock
Associate Director of Computing Services
Director, WNY High Performance Networked Video Initiative
University at Buffalo