Applicant Name: SISTEMA UNIVERSITARIO ANA G. MENDEZ, INC.

Project Title: Universidad del Turabo Sustainable Adoption Broadband Empowerment Resource Center (SABER)

Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

Executive Summary

The target population of the proposed service areas is 1,035,085 persons according to available census data divided as follows by municipality: Gurabo ' 43,000; Yabucoa Region ' 195,891; Isabela Region ' 247,884, Barceloneta ' 225,060, and Ponce Region - 366,850. In October 2009, Puerto Rico's unemployment rate increased to an unprecedented 15.9%, the highest rate in 14 years. According to the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, there have been 109,000 lost jobs in the past 12 months. According to the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, in October 2009 there were 212,000 persons unemployed. As of October 2009, there have been 31 months of continuous employment fall. Available data also demonstrates a 6.9% reduction in the number of self-employed persons; one of the lowest numbers since March 2003. According to Labor Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), from January to March 2009, the employment market with the highest significant change was the San Juan/Caguas/Guaynabo area, with a reduction of 49,400 employed persons. The unemployment rate increased in almost all labor markets, the highest being in San Juan-Caguas-Guaynabo with 17,000 unemployed persons. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the towns (31 out of 42) of the area are distressed communities. All of these towns are communities with an unemployment rate greater than the Puerto Rico unemployment rate of 14.1. The mean family income in the region was $26,975 for 2005. In 2006 this figure increased to $27,499, or a 1.9% increase. For 2007, the family income was $28,056 (US Census Bureau) showing no significant changes with the previous years. Facing the above challenges, Universidad del Turabo (UT) proposes accomplishing the following goals: (1) decrease the project target population unemployment by delivering workforce development training programs for 4,000 participants (2,000/year) in information technology professional certification required by industry and businesses to be promoted by the Commonwealth's Economic and Fiscal Reconstruction Plan (http://www.buengobiernopr.com/reconstruction.html) and two degree certificates in broadband technologies (one Broadband and the other in Wireless technologies), (2) create 7 direct positions as a result of project implementation, (3) a minimum of 160 persons will be equipped to be placed in a job after completing accredited degree programs, and (4) at least 600 jobs will be saved or allow for job improvement, thus promoting an increase in economic development.

Universidad del Turabo is a nonprofit, Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. It is part of the largest independently accredited private university system of higher education in Puerto Rico, focused on formulating ideas through the use of its resources, both internal and external, for the socioeconomic development of Puerto Rico, and for the creation of innovative solutions for the global community. Students work in partnership with faculty, researchers and the community to assure that their academic
endeavors lead them to make real contributions to the community. In support of the above goals UT proposes to implement the workforce development program with support of seven (7) computer teaching sites/facilities, all connected to campus servers through a Private Virtual Network (PVN), 3 at the UT main campus in Gurabo, PR and four (4) teaching labs at university centers located in Isabela, Ponce, Barceloneta and Yabucoa, PR, covering all Island geographic regions. The computer facilities to be enhanced at the UT main campus will supplement the current 22 computer teaching labs by providing remote access to Electronic Information Library, software applications, and to the the applications in the Community Career Center, the latter a strategic in-house institutional center that will facilitate job placement of trainees. In order to address the above unemployment situation, the proposed project will train 4,000 individuals in information technology leading to certificate programs as above listed. The project will increase job placement or improvement expectations for at least 60% of them. Participants will be assisted through the UT Community Career Center established in 2002. Since then the Community Career Center has developed activities directed to encourage economic development and promote self-sufficiency and economic self-reliance of the Institution's surrounding communities. The Center has based services in promoting employment opportunities directed to self-sufficiency of the people served. The UT Community Career Center has demonstrated significant achievements among which are the following: It has served more than 14,236 community participants in direct employability services. As of today, the Center employers' database includes 872 employers and it has been able to place over 3,080 persons in jobs. Through approved project grants from federal agencies, state and community organizations, and internal Institutional resources, the Center served more than 39,491 persons in employability and entrepreneurial activities. Nevertheless, the challenge for higher education to address this economic situation demands newer ways to serve the community and UT students. Changing academic and modern workforce needs require the provision of increased access to technology and information resources. Katz et al. (2008) argue that in order for an educational institution to maintain coherence to a mission and the various educational programs it pursues, it will need to address the challenges of broadband access. The total project costs are $6,591,307 of which $2,941,601 is BTOP funding and $3,649,705 is proposed Cost Share, representing 55.4% of total project costs.