The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) requests funds of $2,700,161 through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program's Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA) category to expand the use of online teaching and collaborative instructional design among the faculty of three, historically black land-grant higher education institutions (LGU's) in three states (Kentucky, Missouri and Maryland); and to promote the availability of new online degree programs to current and new students thus increasing broadband usage and subscribers in each service area. We are providing a match of $862,050 (24.2%) in cash and in-kind revenue toward a total project budget of $3,562,211. Student demand for online college degrees is increasing among students of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Yet, HBCUs serving some of the most vulnerable student populations have not always had the resources to keep up with student demand. Using broadband applications and supports we will create an Extended Campus among three HBCUs to deliver relevant, interactive, online college courses to 8,000 students enrolled in these schools plus up to another thousand potential students in the community college and high school pipelines in the surrounding service areas. Additionally, we will promote and sustain broadband adoption by 150 part-time and full-time faculties at our three LGUs. Our subscribership projections will be monitored by online enrollment data captured through the learning management systems (LMS) at our three institutions. The Extended Campus project includes faculty training and incentive supports, online tutorial supports for students, a virtual lab model and centralized helpdesk operations. The availability and flexibility of these online courses will be promoted through grassroots awareness campaigns within the service areas of each HBCU. The three LGU's are community anchor institutions serving minority (and other) graduate and undergraduate students in three, economically-challenged service areas, they are. -Kentucky State University, Frankfort Kentucky (student population 2,660; 13.2% of service area population is below the poverty line; 87% of students receive financial aid); -Lincoln University, Jefferson City, MO (student population 3,109; 11.5% of service area population is below the poverty line; 91% of students receive financial aid); and -University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, MD (student population 4,192; 39.8% of service area population is below the poverty line; 95% of students receive financial aid). The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) will manage this project. APLU is the oldest non-profit higher education membership organization in the U.S. and has managed programs on behalf of its institutions. Governance for the project at the LGU sites will be provided by the Presidents of the institutions. Each site will be led by a site director who will coordinate a work team consisting of university experts in distance education, science academics and technology. The project (based on the estimates established by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's Council of Economic Advisers) will create 35.6 jobs over the course of
the 2-year grant term. The new jobs include instructional designers, graduate students providing tutoring, students providing part-time support of technical help desks, and IT staff implementing equipment upgrades and supporting faculty training activities. Existing full-time and part-time faculty will have increased job security with the new online teaching skills gained from this project. Finally, students completing the online courses developed in this project will give them a competitive edge in the workforce and greatly increase their potential earning ability. During the course of the project we will: 1. Develop online degree programs by providing instructional design training and other incentives to the LGU faculty participating in this Initiative; 2. Upgrade Learning Management Systems at each of the LGUs to allow digital file sharing (including video/audio) among the institutions, as well as collaborative content development by faculty and students; 3. Equip a multimedia lab to produce, edit and package course lectures and other multi-platform learning resources at each of the three participating university campuses; 4. Purchase hardware and software to provide an online tutoring function and real-time, 24/7 technical help desk for e-learners; 5. Train and equip faculty for real-time, online advising of students; 6. Research, design and implement a multi-media and grassroots outreach and awareness campaign to promote the availability of these new, online services. 7. Deliver new online courses (in collaboration with each LGU and local community partners) via existing broadband platforms in each service area. 8. Evaluate the effectiveness of project elements, in particular student and faculty broadband adoption, faculty professional development and student satisfaction with online services. The three LGUs have agreed to an aggressive design, training and outreach timeline with the delivery of an online graduate degree in Environmental Sciences as the first collaborative offering available in June 2011 (See Appendix E -Project Timeline). The institutions will use either a shared-courses or unified degree model to design the Environmental Sciences online degree and explore the use of other tested, collaborative design models for web-based offerings to high-school seniors and entering freshman students. The UNCF Special Programs Corporation's (UNCFSP) Technical Services Division will help us identify appropriate benchmarking for broadband adoption among the faculty of our LGUs, as well as to evaluate the outcomes of faculty professional development and incentives. We will utilize the services of one or more marketing firms to provide market research on the three service areas and develop a strategy for traditional, grass roots and social networking outreach and public awareness efforts to promote the availability of our new online education service offerings and, thus, impact broadband adoption. It is important to note, that 'but for' the award of this grant, the three institutions would not be able to accelerate this collaboration nor keep pace with their growing student demand for online degree programs. While, these institutions are committed to steady investment in distance learning, the current demands of their students requires an expedited response to build a solid foundation for e-learning activities. The award of this broadband adoption grant will level the playing field for these public institutions so they can compete with private universities that have already made extensive investments in online learning. Once the Extended Campus infrastructure is in place, broadband adoption by e-learners in each service area will be maintained by offering a variety of tuition-based, course offerings online that meet the specific needs of students, community partners and businesses in the service area. The fees associated with these new online offerings will pay for the new activities and jobs created by this 2-year project. This project will demonstrate the power of broadband to extend the service mission of these, and other HBCUs into the vulnerable communities they serve. A BTOP grant award will catalyze the efforts of these community anchor institutions and provide a scalable model for
innovative collaborations among these unique institutions that help build capacity for 21st century higher education in America.