

September 27, 2004

American Association
Of University Women

Re: Gender & Technology

Dear Board Members,

Girl Scouts Hornets' Nest Council has been awarded a research grant to develop and facilitate a program with the objective of fostering girls' (ages 11 – 14) awareness of and interest in the information technology field as a viable career choice. The grant is currently scheduled to run through December 2005.

Girls Are I.T. is an innovative project that we anticipate will have a far reaching impact on several hundred women and girls involved in its planning, delivery and evaluation activities. Furthermore, the outcomes will provide important information for the research community who are interested in encouraging women and minorities to consider IT careers. Our research goals are to increase self-efficacy of girls and minorities to succeed in a broad range of IT careers, and to create a sustainable network of community IT resources which will nurture the ongoing preparation of girls to feed the workforce of the future.

There are presently three major components of the project – a kick off event, an educational website, and a mobile technology classroom. The first is a kick off event on October 30, 2004 at which we will officially unveil the project. We are currently recruiting exhibitors to display different aspects of the IT field (e.g., professional organizations, degree programs, personal testimonies, etc.). Having women (and men) available to discuss what working in the field is really like will address the misconceptions that many girls have about computer professionals – ‘they’re all math and science whizzes’, ‘they’re not approachable’, or ‘they’re recluses’ – as well as simulate the “Techno Divas” biographies on the website.

At the kick off event, we will also be unveiling the other two project components. The website will go live on October 30th. We are in the process of developing the website in partnership with Interactive Knowledge (I-Know), an e-learning design studio that is a national leader in the development of multimedia CD-ROM and web-based educational solutions. I-Know is also developing the four curriculums for the mobile technology classroom. Through their services, we will be addressing the issue of gender biased software. The content of both the website and the software focus on how technology is used to help people live better lives, a key concern of girls according to research studies. Each of the four mobile classroom activities will provide innovative hands-on experience.

We would very much welcome AAUW's input and assistance with the project as outlined above and in the accompanying report, as well as with avenues for future sustainment and expansion of the project. Again, NSF funding of the project is limited to the above mentioned parameters and within the December 2005 timeframe.

One possible area of expansion could include the purchase of eBooks to deliver "Making Choices" technology-based simulation software. The goal of the "Making Choices" program is to use technology to deliver content focused on topics of critical interest to all girls, including: teen pregnancy prevention, substance abuse, body image, and intellect image. This was initially part of the project, however, due to budget constraints, is currently being omitted until we can secure additional funding.

Again, we are open to suggestions, possibly something similar to the IT Empowerment for Women and Girls Initiative facilitated by the Girl Scouts of Chicago and DuPage Count, and funded by the local AAUW Gender Equity Fund.

Please review the accompanying project report, as well as the *Girls Are I.T.* test website at www.girlsareit.org/testing/.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Anderson

Girls Are IT! Grant Administrator

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