FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago State University receives $200,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

CHICAGO – The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, a leading North American philanthropic organization, has awarded Chicago State University’s Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing (GBC) a $200,000 grant, which will expand the center’s HIV/AIDS Youth Prevention Education (H.Y.P.E.) program.

The grant is a monumental achievement for the CSU Center which started its H.Y.P.E. program in 2004 to educate teenagers on Chicago’s Southside and Westside communities about HIV/AIDS. Director Quraysh Ali Lansana envisions the expansion of H.Y.P.E. programs reaching young people in greater numbers.

“Ultimately, H.Y.P.E. furthers the legacy of Ms. Gwendolyn Brooks,” said Lansana. “The virtues of education, literacy, creativity, equality and justice that Ms. Brooks elegantly extolled are embodied in this program.”

Recognizing that HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects African American and Latino American communities, the Brooks Center believed it was necessary to establish an effective, culturally sensitive programming and educational model that established an open and honest exchange about the pandemic.

The H.Y.P.E. program’s mission is to educate high school students, adult-learners and the local community through creative literacy programs. The programs focus on HIV/AIDS prevention and care as well as cultural sensitivity and the removal of stigmas.

The Brooks Center applied for the Kellogg Foundation’s Health and Racial Equity Grant this past winter. Thanks to the Kellogg funding, the Brooks Center will establish two 20-member youth poetry performance ensembles, which will create assembly-length performances combining poetry with song, dance and theater for teenage and young adult audiences.

“Rather than having an official blurt out cold statistics, H.Y.P.E. is about teens talking to teens,” Lansana said. “When teens can hear from other teens about serious issues like HIV/AIDS, there is a greater impact.”

The publication of a third HIV/AIDS anthology, featuring the creative work of teens and young adults, is another critical component to be implemented by the Gwendolyn Brooks Center due to the Kellogg grant. The Center created its critically-acclaimed first anthology, *Fingernails Across the Chalkboard: Poetry and Prose on HIV/AIDS from the Black Diaspora* (Third World Press), in 2007.

“These stories and poems are miraculous; never before have I been drenched in a more bitter, necessary truth; these words can heal and save our lives;” said acclaimed author Marita Golden, about *Fingernails Across the Chalkboard: Poetry and Prose on HIV/AIDS from the Black Diaspora*.

The Brooks Center also plans to establish a H.Y.P.E. model, where HIV/AIDS education is taught by using a cultural and artistically inclined curriculum. The GBC hopes to develop this program as a replicable model of HIV/AIDS youth education so that it can be used in other cities.

For more information, please call (773) 995-4440.