

Information Technology in the News

FRESHMEN CHOOSING ROOMMATES ONLINE

■ This year Emory University is allowing incoming freshmen to choose roommates online using an application not unlike Internet dating services. WebRoomz, the developer of the tool used by Emory, charges \$35,000 or more to a college or university for the tool, which allows students to post profiles of themselves and to correspond using screen names. Profiles include typical roommate-screening information, such as study habits, preferences about food or music, and other lifestyle issues. The WebRoomz system is also being used by several other colleges and universities, though no one is sure yet whether the approach will be successful. Some schools assign roommates on a purely random basis, whereas others collect information and opinions from incoming students and work to find the best matches. Most Emory incoming students who have used the system have been very optimistic about it. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/07/technology/07ROOM.html>> [registration required])

DHS TO FUND UNIVERSITY SECURITY CENTERS

■ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has issued new guidelines for funding homeland security centers at universities. For the 2004 fiscal year, the House of Representatives and the Senate proposed spending a combined \$90 million on the centers and related fellowships. The new guidelines redress what many university officials perceived as a bias favoring Texas A&M University at College Station. According to Jennifer Poulakidas, of the University of California system: "It's a pretty wide open competition." The Oak Ridge Associated Universities, a consortium of research universities, will conduct analyses and make recommendations to the DHS. The



IT DOLLARS

HIGHER EDUCATION INCREASES SPENDING ON HARDWARE

According to data from technology market-research company IDC, colleges and universities spent \$569 million on 517,000 computers in the second quarter of the year, an increase of 17.5 percent. IDC's David Daoud attributed the strong rise—an increase of 4 to 5 percent would be more usual—to strength in the higher education market resulting from tuition increases and growing enrollments. But Kenneth C. Green, of the Campus Computing Project, sees the rise in purchases as a product of a spend-it-before-it's-gone attitude among college and university officials whose budget year ended June 30. Of the computers purchased, 72 percent were desktops, 25 percent laptops, and 3 percent servers. Dell held on to its leading position in the higher education market, with nearly 48 percent market share. Gateway came up second, with 12 percent, followed by Hewlett-Packard, Apple Computer, and IBM. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2003/09/2003091001t.htm>> [subscription required])

REPORT SAYS \$4.6 BILLION AVAILABLE AS GRANT MONEY

A report from market-research company Input estimates that \$4.6 billion of technology funding is available to U.S. colleges and universities in the form of federal grants. Agencies including NASA, the Energy Department, the Agriculture Department, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Health and Human Services offer numerous grant programs, many for purchases of hardware and software. Input's Meredith Luttner noted that many of the grants are not directly IT-related but could be—for example, for a health-related project that requires computer technology to support medical research. According to the report, \$2.84 billion in federal grants has already been awarded to colleges and universities, including Carnegie Mellon University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of California at Berkeley, while another \$4.6 billion remains available. (*Federal Computer Week*, <<http://www.fcw.com/geb/articles/2003/0915/web-input-09-15-03.asp>>)

first grant—for a center to focus on economic strategies to cope with terrorism—will be awarded in November, with plans to establish nine additional centers by the end of 2004. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2003/07/2003072401n.htm>> [subscription required])

MEDICAL EDUCATION GOES VIRTUAL

■ This fall the International Virtual Medical School will begin offering online courses toward the first two years of med-

ical school. The program, which has garnered support from more than thirty institutions including Brown Medical School and Hull York Medical School in the United Kingdom, will focus on the "cognitive mode of learning a lot of material" that does not require much hands-on time, according to Stephen Smith, of Brown Medical School. Ronald Harden, of the International Virtual Medical School, sees offering the first two years of medical school online as the first step toward offering a complete medical degree

tech watch

using distance learning. (*Wired News*, <<http://www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,59927,00.html>>)

BRINGING TECHNOLOGY TO RURAL MINNESOTA

■ The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Northeast Higher Education District is using a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to establish a set of training centers to help residents of the northern part of the state gain necessary job skills to move from jobs in timber, tourism, and mining into technology fields. The True North program aims to set up a training center, called a Tech Prep Center, in each town that has a college. Teachers at the centers will be faculty from area colleges, and the specific courses offered will vary across centers depending on what job skills carry the most demand. John Ondov, of the Lifelab Institute, which is managing the program, said the newly trained technology workforce could offer an alternative for U.S. corporations that hope to save money by outsourcing certain operations to overseas personnel. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2003/07/2003072901t.htm>> [subscription required])

ONLINE RELEASE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

■ The U.S. Department of Education has proposed updating its rules to allow online authorization of the release of personal information, such as transcripts. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires authorization for such a release, and current rules mandate that students or alumni provide a handwritten signature. Some colleges and universities, however, already allow online authorization. Noting that rules based on FERPA were drafted prior to a law that grants electronic signatures equal status as handwritten ones, officials at these institutions say that the subsequent law means that electronic signatures are already acceptable for authorization. Others disagree, saying that until the rule is officially changed, a handwritten

COLLEGES INVESTIGATE LEGAL FILE-SHARING

Members of the Joint Committee of the Higher Education and Entertainment Communities are working to identify ways to reduce the illegal sharing of copyrighted files on college and university campuses. According to Graham Spanier, the president of Pennsylvania State University and the co-chair of the committee, one proposal would provide students with legal access to online music through a service that would work similarly to cable television in dorm rooms. Spanier said about a dozen institutions are considering testing such a program. The committee will not endorse specific solutions to the problem of illegal file-sharing but hopes to collect educational, technological, and policy resources that parties from both the higher education and the entertainment communities can use to work toward joint solutions. The other co-chair of the committee, Cary Sherman of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), said that “collaborative solutions are the best approach” because higher education administrators and entertainment executives “are in this boat together.” (*Internet News*, <<http://dc.internet.com/news/article.php/3071331>>)



THE NEXT HORIZON FOR COPYRIGHT VIOLATIONS: SOFTWARE PIRACY

A new survey shows that although software piracy trails music and movie piracy, the practice is rising among U.S. college students and poses a substantial long-term problem. According to the survey, which was sponsored by the Business Software Alliance, 23 percent of students have downloaded software over peer-to-peer networks, and 68 percent have either never or rarely paid for that software. In addition, the survey showed that 30 percent of faculty and administrators have downloaded software and that 30 percent of faculty and 45 percent of administrators never or rarely paid for it. Diane Smirolodo, of the Business Software Alliance, said that although her group recognizes that pirating of music and movies is currently a more widespread problem, students who develop the attitude that pirating software is acceptable will take that idea with them when they enter the workplace. “Administrators and educators need to reach out to students more,” said Smirolodo, “to let them know that this activity is illegal and won’t be condoned.” (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2003/09/2003091801t.htm>> [subscription required])

signature is still required to authorize the release of personal information. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2003/08/2003080601t.htm>> [subscription required])

WIRELESS CAMPUS TOURS

■ To make touring the Cornell University campus easier, Cornell is experimenting with a research project—underwritten by Intel—that involves context-aware computers. Visitors carry a Palm organizer equipped with a global positioning sys-

tem and the Campus Aware tour-guide program. Students in the university’s Human-Computer Interaction Group load text-based information into each Palm and tag the unit to the latitude and longitude of campus landmarks. When those stored components match the components calculated by the GPS unit, the Palm beeps and displays notes of the official history along with comments added by previous visitors to that spot. The current user is invited to add a remark as well. The new notes are synchronized

techwatch

net news

CONSORTIUM ANNOUNCES FIBER-OPTIC RESEARCH NETWORK

Plans were released in mid-September for an initiative to build a national fiber-optic network to support future science, engineering, and medical research projects. National LambdaRail Inc. will use existing fiber-optic cables and will spend several months installing the necessary optical equipment, switches, and routers to form a viable network. Initial members of the National LambdaRail consortium include Internet2, the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center. The network is expected to be capable of speeds of 40 gigabits per second, four times faster than Abilene, the high-speed network operated by Internet2. Unlike Abilene, which is owned by Qwest Communications International and leased to Internet2 members, the National LambdaRail network will be entirely owned by members of the LambdaRail consortium. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2003/09/2003091701t.htm>> [subscription required])

each night with those on other Campus Aware units. Recent Cornell graduates Kiyo Kubo and Nick Farina, who developed the Campus Aware project, have started a company called Spotlight Mobile to program off-the-shelf hardware for palmtop tours. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/21/technology/circuits/21gpss.html>> [registration required])

UNIVERSITAS 21 GLOBAL OPENS ITS DOORS

■ The newest entry in the online higher education market began offering classes to twenty-seven students in its opening week this fall. Universitas 21 Global is a for-profit venture financed by the publishing company Thompson Corporation and by seventeen research universities, in ten countries, that are partners in the project. The school's first offering is an MBA, with all coursework and lectures handled online. Students can enroll on a weekly basis and complete coursework when they choose. Officials hope enrollments will increase to 500 by the end of July 2004. But some observers question whether this is realistic and note that there are already other, well-known providers of online MBAs. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2003/08/2003082801t.htm>> [subscription required])

CUT-AND-PASTE PLAGIARISM ON THE RISE

■ A survey of more than 18,000 students on twenty-three college campuses indicates a growing incidence of Internet plagiarism among U.S. college students. According to the survey, conducted by Rutgers University management professor Donald L. McCabe, 38 percent of respondents said they had been involved in "cut-and-paste" cheating within the past year. This compares to 10 percent in a similar, though smaller, survey conducted three years ago. McCabe attrib-

uted some of the rise to growing ignorance among college students about what constitutes proper citation. Indeed, nearly half the students who participated in the survey said they did not consider copying several sentences or even full paragraphs without citation to be cheating. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/03/education/03CHEA.html>> [registration required])

"techwatch" is a sampler of items from *Edupage*, EDUCAUSE's three-times-a-week electronic digest of information technology news. To subscribe to *Edupage*, send a message to <listserv@listserv.educause.edu> and in the body of the message type "SUBSCRIBE Edupage YourFirstName YourLastName."