COLLEGE BOYCOTT GIVES JOLT TO "WIRED" SURVEY

■ At least thirteen universities boycotted this year's *Yahoo! Internet Life*'s survey of the "most wired" colleges and universities after the publication refused to disclose the criteria it uses to rank the schools. *Yahoo! Internet Life* (*YIL*) Editor Rob Bernstein says the boycott is a re-flection of how important the Inter-net has become to universities. Har-vard, Stanford, and Yale were among the schools that refused to participate in the survey this year. *YIL*'s "most wired" list this year was topped by Carnegie Mellon Univer-sity, followed by the University of Delaware and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. (*USA Today*)

NSF AWARDS NETWORK GRANTS TO TEN UNIVERSITIES

■ The National Science Foundation has given ten universities high-performance computing grants worth about $350,000 each. The two-year grants will allow the schools to connect to a grid of research networks including the Internet2 consortium's Abilene, MCI WorldCom's vBNS, and several high-speed government networks. Jackson State University in Missis-sippi, one of the grant recipients, will use the award to buy a high-speed router and link to Abilene. The high-speed network will help Jackson State's professors and students use scientific visualization and other high-performance applications. Using its Abilene connection, Jackson will participate in a distance-learning project with Syracuse University. Another recipi-ent, the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, will use its grant to gain access to real-time tele-scope data. Since 1995, the National Science Foundation has awarded high-performance computing grants to a total of 177 institutions. (*Chronicle of Higher Education Online*)

ONE COLLEGE LEADS THE WAY IN REQUIRING ONLINE APPLICATIONS

■ West Virginia Wesleyan is the first college to require undergraduate applications to be filled out and submitted online. Beyond the application requirement, the school provides laptop computers to all students and intends to have wire-less Internet access available by fall. Supplemental application material, such as transcripts and teacher rec-ommendations, will still be ac-cepted on paper sent in the mail. Requiring online applications should not prevent anyone from ap-plying, school officials say. Students will be given access to the laptops of admissions counselors visiting high schools, or they can use computers available in churches, public li-braries, and schools. The applica-tion will take only about half an hour for most students to fill out and does not require essays. Still, some are concerned that disabled individuals will be excluded. The college's president said alternatives would be found for students unable to apply online due to disabilities. (*New York Times*)

UNIVERSITIES SEE WEB AS TOOL TO SELL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

■ Hoping to supplement waning federal research funds, universities are selling their intellectual property online. Using traditional means, universities have been largely unsuccessful in their efforts to sell their research; in 1998, just

e - commerce

E-COMMERCE MAY HELP COLLEGES CUT COSTS AND PAPERWORK

Many colleges and universities are now building online purchasing systems in an effort to cut costs and streamline procurement. The University of Pennsylvania, for exam-ple, is developing a purchasing sys-tem to encourage staff to take advantage of volume discounts by buying within the system rather than ordering from their favorite retailers. Penn's system will search vendors' supply catalogs, approve orders online, and automatically send orders to suppliers. California State University at Fullerton and the University of California at Los Angeles also are building online pur-chasing systems. The systems prom-ise to eliminate much of the paper-work involved in purchasing, thereby lowering costs significantly. The Fullerton campus estimates that e-commerce systems will lower costs from about $150 per transaction to about $10 to $15 per transaction by eliminating the workers and paper required in the traditional method. However, e-commerce systems are difficult to implement, since schools must integrate customized financial systems with Web-based purchasing systems. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*)

three cents of revenue was gener-ated from every dollar spent on research initiatives. Universities attribute this poor return to inexpe-rience in the market and an empha-sis on department interests rather than market requirements when performing research. A new online intellectual marketplace, called UVentures.com, aims to improve

tech watch

university efforts to sell intellectual property by connecting buyers and sellers online. The marketplace is expected to generate more purchases than traditional methods because it links a greater variety of interested parties. The marketplace is also expected to make it easier for companies to search for available intellectual properties. "We welcome with open arms this ability to find technology by browsing a single site," says Bob Johnson, a commercial analyst at biotechnology firm Onyvax Limited. (*InternetWeek Online*)

DOT-COMS INVADE THE DORMITORY

■ In the tradition of Dell Computer and Microsoft, more and more college students are running dot-com businesses out of their dorm rooms—despite some school policies forbidding such enterprises. Past prohibitions on student business stemmed from the noise and confusion created in merchandise-based transactions—a student selling T-shirts out of a dorm room, for example. But today's student entrepreneurs use computers and cell phones to conduct business quietly and their activities are less disturbing to their roommates. Some school tech staff watch levels of Internet traffic to try to ferret out those doing business online. But student entrepreneurs set up off-campus post office boxes, use cell phones and non-school Internet addresses, and meet prospective investors in restaurants to avoid detection. And even when the students are caught, some schools do little more than lecture them. (*Newsweek*)

EDUCATION REASSESSED IN WORKER SHORTAGE DEBATE

■ The high-tech industry, complaining of a severe labor shortage, is reconsidering the importance of a four-year college degree for certain types of IT workers. Four-year universities are often unable to keep up with rapidly changing technology. As a result, lobbyists and recruiters are turning to community colleges and for-profit schools, which seem to be more flexible and less expensive than traditional schools, says Harris Miller, president of the Information Technology Association of America. Industry observers say some technicians and support staff do not need the same level of education as software developers, for example. (*EE Times Online*)

YOU'VE GOT MAIL: ADMISSIONS LETTERS HAVE GONE ONLINE

■ A handful of universities are now using e-mail to notify prospective students that their applications for admission were successful. Northwestern University says it sent about 4,000 e-mails to successful applicants, with the messages arriving before the admission information packets arrived via regular mail. Applicants like the e-mail notification process because they often find out sooner whether their applications have been accepted. Admissions officers say the use of e-mail is a natural extension of the online admissions process. As part of its e-mail message, Northwestern also included an ID number for students to use when logging onto the university's Web site. Prospective

Security | Issues

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SETS PACE ON DIGITAL CERTIFICATES

The University of Pittsburgh is taking the lead in employing digital certificates to secure e-commerce transactions. The university has already given out roughly 2,000 digital certificates to students and staff so that they can purchase goods at the school's online store, and in the near future the university expects to conduct its legal business and transfer electronic funds using digital certificates. Digital certificates contain small amounts of code that prove the identity of a person, as well as a public and private cryptographic key. The university plans to expand the use of digital certificates to online transactions conducted in the confines of the university network. This fall the school will unveil a new automated system that contains a centralized database of student and employee computer accounts, linked to the university's enrollment and payment databases. The system will create and manage new computer accounts and digital certificates for employees and staff and will automatically delete accounts when the account holders are no longer at the university. The university also expects soon to begin providing smart-card IDs with digital certificates to students. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*)
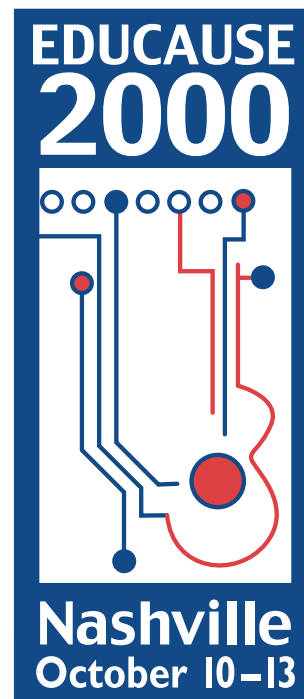
students whose applications were denied were notified via regular mail. (*Wall Street Journal*)

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One of America's most widely read syndicated newspaper columnists, Dave Barry is the author of numerous books of humor, including *Dave Barry in Cyberspace, Dave Barry Slept Here: A Sort of History of the United States, Dave Barry Is from Mars AND Venus,* and *Dave Barry's Book of Bad Songs.* He received the Pulitzer Prize for his commentary in 1988.

Judy Estrin
Technology visionary Judy Estrin, chief executive officer of Packet Design, Inc., a company focused on technology to scale the Internet, until recently was chief technology officer and senior vice president for Cisco Systems. She co-founded Bridge Communications Systems, a pioneer in internetwork routers, bridges, and communications servers, which merged with 3Com in 1987.

David Halberstam
Through his trilogy on power in America, David Halberstam, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Best and the Brightest, The Powers That Be,* and *The Reckoning,* has helped shape our understanding of the latter half of the 20th century more than any other contemporary author.

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