ACUTA eNews January 2006, Vol.35, No. 1

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I recently participated in the Council of Higher Education Management Associations (CHEMA) meeting, along with ACUTA IT Manager Aaron Fuehrer and 38 other individuals from associations representing administrative professionals at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada.

This was an outstanding opportunity to exchange information with association CEOs whose associations serve the needs of your colleagues in nearly all aspects of higher education management, including business officers, physical plant officers, procurement professionals, campus law enforcement, student affairs professionals, housing officers, librarians, campus stores, conference and events directors, human resources, and too many other areas to mention.

Each of these professionals interacts with communications technology on campus in many ways, and these twice-yearly opportunities to exchange information are always invaluable. Some of the areas discussed this time included IT trends for associations, examples of innovative use of technology, organizational structures and cultures, and hurricane relief. There was also time set aside for the IT managers from all of the participating associations to network and share information.

I would like to share the highlights of an excellent presentation from the American Council on Education (ACE), a Presidential-level association that has played a major role in coordinating higher education's response to the devastating hurricanes of 2005. As other public policy issues arise in Washington, and the immediate urgency of hurricane relief subsides in Congress, I think it is important for all of us to remember the long-term effects that will be felt in the Gulf region and particularly in its higher education institutions.

It is hard to conceive of the magnitude of the 2005 hurricane season, including Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. In addition to the estimated $70-$130 billion cost, these storms caused the largest displacement of people in the U.S. since the Great Depression. ACE estimates that 75,000-100,000 students and thousands of faculty and staff were displaced by the 2005 hurricanes.

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The higher education community responded to this situation with extreme generosity. Many schools accepted displaced students without any guarantee of receiving tuition or fee reimbursement. Some also acted as shelters for displaced persons and provided facilities for the continuation of vital research and health care services.

Most or all of the closed institutions continued to pay their faculty and staffs for months following the disasters. However, layoffs are now occurring. If and when institutions are financially able to rehire and reopen, it is far from certain that these highly trained professional staff and faculty will be able to return to their previous employers, due to the lack of housing and facilities to support them. Another huge unknown is the percentage of students (and their parents) who will choose to return to the affected areas.

It was also interesting to learn that private institutions are not able to receive FEMA funds for recovery, and must go through the Small Business Administration for any governmental rebuilding assistance. According to our speaker, the SBA has never in its history granted a loan to an educational institution, so the prospects of SBA help are somewhat bleak.

On the positive side, ACE reported that all 15 institutions in Louisiana and 2 in Mississippi that had to close as a result of the storm have announced plans to reopen. In addition, the energy and devotion of the senior leaders, staff, and faculty who are working to reopen their campuses is remarkable. The website that was organized by the higher education community as an information clearinghouse for relief offers and requests (www.campusrelief.org) had more than 80,000 hits as of the end of November.

Congress has earmarked $60 billion for the relief effort thus far, but most of the funds have not been spent. There have also been bills passed to grant relief from some student aid obligations.

In addition, on December 7 the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund announced a first grant of $30 million for 34 higher education institutions, including the University of New Orleans, Tulane University, and Loyola University of New Orleans, as well as other universities and colleges across Mississippi and Alabama.

We were very happy to hear recently from the telecommunications manager at Tulane that their electricity was finally restored on December 9, and they expected to have their office fully open by December 19.

ACUTA continues its offers of assistance to institutions affected by these storms. Check our website at http://www.acuta.org/31383 for details. We continue to keep these communities in our thoughts and extend them our wishes for a full recovery.

Audio Seminar

ACUTA audio seminars are a very good value:
An unlimited number of colleagues at your institution may listen in via speakerphone at no extra charge.

Tuesday, January 24, 2006, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. EST

TOPIC: Creative Cost Savings in Communications Technology

Presenter: Jack Babbitt, Asst. Director of Networking, Univ. of Connecticut

UConn's telecom staff looked deep into their organization and identified areas that might produce cost savings. What resulted was seven-digit savings for fiscal year 2005 with half of that becoming a recurring yearly savings. The savings came from billing reviews, renewed contract negotiations, and changed business processes. There was also a chance for UConn and other Connecticut State agencies to develop synergistic opportunities which contributed to the savings.

Check the ACUTA website for online registration, or contact Amy White, awhite@acuta.org, at 859/278-3338.

Direct questions regarding content to Donna Hall, ACUTA Manager of Professional Development, dhall@acuta.org or phone 859/278-3338.
Skype May Be Unwanted,
But at Least It’s Not Harmful

Kevin Tanzillo
Dux PR
kevin@duxpr.com

Skype is hot and getting hotter, and between students and your own internal network users, it is going to be nearly impossible to keep it off your network. Fortunately, that doesn’t seem to present either a security or a bandwidth problem.

You have no doubt heard of the free Skype Internet phone calling service, which now boasts millions of users worldwide. Users—from individuals to smaller businesses and organizations—are particularly fond of it for international calls, to avoid those multiple-dollars-per-minute charges.

To use Skype, a peer-to-peer application, users download software and are able to talk via headset, speakers, or USB telephone over the Internet at no cost with other Skype users, or for a very small fee with regular phone users. Anyone pinching pennies is naturally drawn to Skype, so you can see why students—and budget-strapped college and university departments—find it attractive.

As a desktop application that uses the network, Skype fortunately consumes very little bandwidth, unlike other piggish peer-to-peer applications (such as music and video sharing) that can eat up network resources. A Skype phone call requires just 33 to 46 kilobits per second of bandwidth in each direction, which is pretty efficient. Of course, if there are enough simultaneous Skype calls, it could become a bandwidth issue.

Network World magazine ran an interesting story last month, about an in-depth Skype evaluation run by an outside test center. On the good news side, the center declared that Skype poses almost no security threats to the network. The test center found no vulnerabilities, and there have been no recorded incidents of Skype being compromised.

On the bad news side—depending on your point of view and the strictness of your network policies—is that Skype is nearly impossible to detect and stop. Its traffic is encrypted, it randomly varies the TCP ports that it uses, and its packet lengths and voice over IP sample sizes are varied.

Skype, the test center found, dynamically alters its traffic characteristics. It can work through pretty much any firewall and network address translation system, in which a unique external IP address is associated with each internal user. The test pitted several commercial firewalls, configurations, and intrusion-prevention systems against Skype, and not a one of them could prevent the application from operating.

There is a very slight risk inherent in the usage agreements that users must “OK” when they download Skype software, and we know no one ever reads those. As part of that agreement, and this is noteworthy, they consent to allow Skype to use the PC and its resources. Conceivably, a given PC could become a Skype SuperNode and play a proxy role in Skype call setup. The test center experienced no such attempted takeovers, and suggested that this would only be a risk in instances where the node maintains a long-term presence using the same public IP address.

If your policies prohibit any application such as Skype on your network and you set out to enforce that, be warned: You will have your hands full. There are said to be intrusion-prevention systems in development that will be able to detect and stop Skype calls, so watch for their availability. In the meantime, at least be assured that the risks are few.

As always, if there are specific topics you would like to see covered in this space, please let me know via e-mail at kevin@duxpr.com.

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Institutional Excellence Award Deadline Is February 4

Has your campus undertaken a project that you feel exemplifies excellence in communications technology and deserves special recognition? If so, you should enter the competition for the ACUTA Award for Institutional Excellence in Communications Technology.

Winners receive a beautiful crystal award and 2 complimentary registrations for an ACUTA Annual Conference. Details and an application form are available at www.acuta.org. ACUTA thanks PAETEC Communications for sponsoring this award.
In March 2005, Student Monitor of Ridgewood, NJ, conducted extensive research into how students are using communications technology on campus today. ACUTA eNews is pleased to feature selected results of that survey. We appreciate Student Monitor’s assistance as we strive to provide the most useful and up-to-date information to our readers.

If you would like to know more about the survey, contact Eric Weil, managing partner at Student Monitor; at weil@studentmonitor.com, or visit their website at http://www.studentmonitor.com.

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<td>Keep in touch</td>
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<th>Who Pays the Cell Phone Bill?</th>
<th>Parents (48%) and the student (42%) are most likely to pay the student’s monthly cell bill.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Share with Parents</td>
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<td>Other mentions</td>
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Here are a few additional tips for using and viewing the PDF version of the Membership Directory that was recently placed on the ACUTA website.

First, be sure that Adobe Acrobat Reader is installed on your computer. Typically this is already installed on most modern computer configurations, but if you need to download the free Reader application go to http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html.

Next, because the PDF document is displayed in a separate browser window, be sure to disable any pop-up blocking software that you may have running or configure it to allow pop-ups from www.acuta.org.

Lastly, when searching the PDF for words, use CTRL-F to open a find window. If the word or phrase you were looking for is found and you want to look further in the document for the next occurrence, press CTRL-G.

Don’t forget that the real-time searchable membership directory is still available on the website. To search for college and university members, click on http://www.acuta.org/dynamic/members/Search_Step2.cfm. To search for corporate affiliates, go to http://www.acuta.org/dynamic/members/Corporate_Search_Step2.cfm. If you are looking for a particular product or service, check out what our Corporate Affiliates have to offer at http://www.acuta.org/dynamic/members/Corporate_Search_Step3.cfm. The previous links can also be found in the Member Services pull-down menu on the ACUTA website.

If you have any questions please contact me at afuehrer@acuta.org.

Online Directory and Other Useful Resources

Aaron Fuehrer
ACUTA Information
Technology Manager
afuehrer@acuta.org
Thanks to Sponsors for 2005

At ACUTA conferences and seminars you will notice that many events and items are sponsored. This means that a vendor has contributed the funds that make that amenity or that event affordable for ACUTA. It enriches our events to have a special dinner and entertainment on Monday night, to have portfolios and pens, to enjoy coffee breaks and snacks, and much more.

The following companies have sponsored in the past year. Please thank them as you have occasion and include them in your RFPs.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>All 4 Events</th>
<th>2 Events</th>
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<td>Telecom Technology Resellers LLC</td>
<td>Matsch Systems</td>
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<td>Compco</td>
<td>MICTA</td>
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<td>PAETEC Communications</td>
<td>Qwest Communications</td>
<td>Netcentrex, Inc.</td>
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<td>RMS Telecommunications LLC</td>
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<td>Verizon</td>
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The Board of Directors met by conference call on December 7. The Board approved the following:

- Chris Peabody was appointed to the Legislative/Regulatory Affairs Committee.
- Art Leible was appointed to the Program Committee.
- Complimentary registrations were approved for Program Committee members who meet the participation requirements for the 2006 Annual Conference.
- ACUTA's 9/30/05 and year-end financial reports were approved, with the comment that it was a good year financially.
- The Austin Hilton will be the site of the Winter 2007 Seminars.
- The Executive Director's goals and action items for 2006 were approved.
- Association Laboratory was selected to conduct the 2006 member needs assessment survey.

Several officers and staff members planned to meet with leaders from the Association of Higher Education Cable Television Administrators (AHECTA) on December 12 to discuss the possibilities for collaboration between ACUTA and AHECTA.

ACUTA members will be asked to participate in a web-based survey regarding the Annual Conference (conducted by Attendance Marketing).

As of the Board meeting date there were over 391 attendees and 117 sites participating in the December 13 Audio Seminar on regulatory hot topics, and the number is expected to grow further.

The Board reviewed the minutes of an ACUTA Task Force that is discussing the renewal of ACUTA's agreement with MICTA, and further discussions will follow in January.

Respectfully submitted,
Riny Ledgerwood
Secretary/Treasurer
A BIG idea: Broadband-in-Gas

How many of us have ever thought about using the pipelines that provide natural gas heating fuel to the house or business as a means of broadband delivery?

"Given the competitive cost advantage of delivering broadband communications services using ultrawideband technology installed along natural gas pipelines to homes and business, broadband-in-gas (BIG) technology should deliver the full bundle of communications services to 18 million households by 2010, according to a report from West Technology Research Solutions," says Telecommunications Reports (TR 11/15/05).

BIG technology is expected to deliver twice the bandwidth of digital subscriber line technology at about the same cost. Natural gas lines are connected to more than 70 percent of residences and more than 35 percent of businesses in the U. S.

It will be interesting to watch the development of BIG to see how and if it really is developed in the next few years. It would likely be a more secure system since hurricanes, tornadoes, and other potential calamities threaten the lines that connect the customer to the carrier above the ground.

More Than “Quadruple Play”

Quadruple play is a term used to include the service of voice, video, high-speed data, and wireless service. Sprint Nextel Corp. has announced a joint venture with four cable TV providers that will enable the cable companies to offer quadruple play and also new forms of mobile entertainment options. These cable TV companies now expect to better compete with Bell companies that are getting into the video service business. The joint venture will also allow sprint to develop its own services that incorporate aspects of the cable provider’s offerings.

The combined group is planning to market the new services beginning in 2006 with bundled service offerings including video, wireless voice and data, high-speed data, and cable telephony. (TR 11/15/05)

Consumer Complaints

Complaints filed with the FCC involving both the wireless and wireline categories have increased during the third quarter over the prior quarter. The increase in wireline complaints was from 15,323 in the second quarter to 20,899 in the third quarter and over three-fourths of the third quarter complaints were related to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, “including compliance with prohibitions on prerecorded messages to residences without prior consent and requirements for phone solicitors to maintain do-not-call lists.” The second largest group of complaints relate to billing and rates, but this category decreased from the 2nd quarter count of 3,465 to 3,237.

The wireless service area had a small increase from 6,783 to 6,873. Complaints about billing and rates fell from 3,320 to 3,259, about early-contract-termination provisions rose from 1,064 to 1,075 and about marketing and advertising fell from 929 to 713.

A few complaints were also issued relating to some aspects of broadband services and some other services. (TR 11/15/05)

Katrina and ETC

In September and October the FCC approved a plan for carriers to provide mobile phones and minutes to Hurricane Katrina evacuees at no cost. There were a lot of meetings and discussions between the carriers and the FCC to determine just what the program really was, how it would work, and what carriers would be involved.

The FCC indicated that about 65 wireless carriers have been designated as eligible telecommunications carriers (ETC) in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. They were also permitting some other carriers to become temporary ETC participants. The program expires March 1, 2006.
Funding for the program is to come as part of a $211 million segment of the Universal Service Fund with an estimated cost of the ETC program to be about $39 million. Any carrier that receives $1 million or more in USF funding will be subject to an audit. (TR 11/15/05, 12/1/05)

**SPYBLOCK BILL**

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation has approved a bill to outlaw “computer hijacking” and other practices related to spyware, unwanted pop-up ads, spam, and modern hijacking to place overseas calls that are then billed to modem’s owner. The bill, which will strengthen enforcement by the FTC, is the Software Principles Yielding Better Levels of Consumer Knowledge (SPYBLOCK) Act. (TR 12/1/05)

**More on the USF**

- Two telcos have been ordered by the FCC to return about $700,000 that they had received from the USF dollars because they failed to meet statutory and regulatory obligations. Communications Service Integrated, Inc., will be paying back $462,638 and Global Teldata II. LLC, will pay back $236,774. “Both companies were found to have ‘willfully and repeatedly’ failed to register with the FCC. In addition, they both violated Commission rules by failing to submit Telecommunications Reporting Worksheet, and were cited for not making contributions to USF.” (TR 11/15/05)

- *The Telecom Manager’s Voice Report* (VR 11/14/05) reports that $10 billion in USF funds was mismanaged, according to a House committee investigation. An oversight subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee has been looking into the distribution and use of the E-rate funds for linking schools and libraries to the Internet for over a year. Their report, released early in November, indicated that the E-rate funding has been poorly managed and suffers from inadequate oversight by the FCC. The report says further that Congress should weigh whether the FCC should continue to manage the program and if it is spending too much money. At a school in Puerto Rico, committee staff reportedly found about $23.5 million worth of computer equipment, including 73,000 wireless cards, still shrink wrapped and sitting in a warehouse. (VR 11/14/05)

- One change under consideration for the USF is a flat-fee plan. This plan might add about $700 million into the USF and would cost telephone consumers with the monthly fee likely to range between $1 and $2 per phone line. The current pay plan is based on long-distance calls that are made over the phone. Many consumers do not make any, or only a very few, long-distance calls from their phone, so this flat-fee plan would be an increase on the phone bill. Several groups like Consumer Action and Seniors Coalition have expressed concern. The FCC has not yet formally unveiled a USF funding plan change. (TR 12/1/05)

Reps. Terry (R., Neb.) and Boucher (D., Va.) have released a draft of a bill that they intend to introduce early in 2006 which is expected to be known as the “Universal Service Reform Act” (USRA). It includes a number of changes and expansions to the use of USF funds, such as requiring that fund recipients offer broadband service within five years and expand the contribution base to include Internet protocol voice and broadband service providers. The draft was presented to the House Energy and Commerce Committee about mid November. It is interesting that the Committee chairman Rep. Barton (R., Texas) will permit consideration of the measure, even though he has expressed the desire to abolish the USF. (TR 12/1/05)

**Federal Excise Tax**

This tax has a long history with changes in the amount of the tax and the way it is collected. The last change set the rate as a 3 percent surcharge on toll-telephone service. There have been a few challenges to the legality of the excise tax as it is being applied in the courts. Two Appeals Courts have ruled against the tax as it was being applied. Early in November the Sixth Circuit Appeals Court in Cincinnati became the second Court to rule against the tax. This case involved OfficeMax who filed claims seeking a refund of more than $380,000 it had paid as part of long-distance service it purchased through MCI during 2002 and 2003. In seeking the refund, the company argued that MCI was not providing a taxable service as defined by Congress. The court ruled in favor of OfficeMax which concurred with the decision of the Appeals Court in Atlanta in May 2005. (TR 11/15/05)
Welcome New Members

Corporate Affiliate Members

Copper Members

Anixter, Glenview, IL .................................................. http://www.anixter.com
Mike Byers, Marketing Manager; 724/251-8556
Anixter is the world’s largest distributor of communication products and electrical and electronic wire and cable, and a leading distributor of fasteners and other small parts (“C” class inventory components) to original equipment manufacturers.

Bradford Networks, Concord, NH ......................... http://www.bradfordnetworks.com
Bob Anderson, VP Marketing; 603/228-5300 x5340
An industry leader in delivering innovative enterprise network policy enforcement solutions. We offer solutions that leverage our customers’ current investment in their multi-vendor network infrastructure and deliver significant features and benefits in the areas of policy, monitoring, and control for enterprise networks.

Systems Integration, Inc., Landover, MD .................. http://www.sysintegration.com
Allen McPherson, Business Development; 240/764-1089
Since 1990, SII has been providing integrated customer interaction solutions and operational support to business and government — dramatically improving customer service response times, reducing abandon call rates, and increasing service staff productivity.

ACUTA Online Press Room

The following press releases have been posted to the ACUTA website since the December eNews. We encourage you to visit the ACUTA website frequently for the latest information from a variety of sources, including our corporate affiliates.

- Indiana University Selects Interactive Intelligence for Unified Messaging Services
- Compass Consulting becomes a division of Acentech, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts

ACUTA Events Calendar

Spring Seminars
April 2-5, 2006
Providence, RI
- VoIP & Its Applications
- Network Survivability

Annual Conference
July 23-27, 2006
San Diego, CA

Fall Seminars
Oct. 22-25, 2006
Portland, OR
- New & Evolving Technologies
- Chargeback & Cost Models

Winter Seminars
January 21-24, 2006
Austin, TX
(Topic TBA)

Satisfaction Guaranteed: ACUTA stands behind the quality of its seminars and conferences. If you do not believe your time and money were well invested, ACUTA will refund your registration fee. Just write to us within one week following the end of the event.