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Resource Center

Virginia Universities, Colleges Connect K12 Schools to Super Fast Networks

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Blacksburg, May 18, 2006 -- Virginia 's K12 schools, museums, and libraries will be among the first in the nation to connect to both the National LambdaRail (NLR) and f research and education nationwide, providing high - pe r formance network ing which enables applications like DVD quality videoconferencing and access to tools advanced tools such as remotely-controlled electron microscopes.

Both networks offer tremendous capacity. Project members point out that Abilene provides the research and education community with reliable, high performance network services is 6,000 times at speeds 10,000 times faster than DSL, and NLR is even faster. NLR is even faster, NLR can w ith the ability to support the capacity of 40 Abilene networks simultaneously with room to grow.

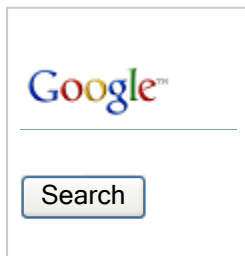
But speed isn't the total story. "These networks, particularly NLR, use new technology to provide far greater flexibility and control to support high-end multimedia and very demanding scientific applications," said Erv Blythe, NLR board member and vice president for information technology at Virginia Tech. "And the economics of the NLR model are very compelling," he added.

"The availability of research, educational content, and advanced capabilities through Network Virginia for all education partners placed Virginia at the head of the class," said Glenn DuBois, chancellor of the Virginia Community College System. "This advancement will improve access and delivery of crucial education and training throughout the commonwealth."

The Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ) in Fairfax County is the first Virginia K12 school to connect to NLR. TJ students have already been working with coursework in supercomputing and advanced network protocols directly relevant to NLR and Internet2. Faculty members at TJ and Virginia Tech are developing ideas to augment these programs and expand access to opportunities ranging from distributed performing arts education to instruction in distributed supercomputing for high school students statewide.

"Virginia students will gain access to technology and hands-on educational opportunities previously available only to advanced students at elite universities," said Tammy McGraw, director of educational technology at the Virginia Department of Education.

National LambdaRail provides access to the nation's most powerful research network and computing resources, while Internet2 brings a successful K20 (through graduate school) program with a wealth of educational technology program support and collaboration opportunities. Combined access to both gives Virginia researchers and learners a leap frog advantage.



"National LambdaRail is pleased with the leadership of our university members in Virginia in broadening access to the K20 community," said Tom West, president and CEO of NLR. "I am particularly intrigued with plans to integrate high performance computing and networking technology into advanced high school curricula."

Louis Fox, director of the Internet2 K20 Initiative, said, "Internet2 has been providing advanced networking for the nation's K-20 community for many years and has been successful in bringing advanced educational programs to Virginia. Through the use of Internet2's advanced networks, students across the state have been able to participate in cutting-edge experiences like targeted at K20 education that will be available to schools across Virginia include Megaconference Jr., a project that uses advanced videoconferencing technology to bring together thousands of students in elementary and secondary schools from around the world for an all-day learning conference."

"Also, students can also receive live undersea exploration demonstrations from remote locations with famed oceanographer Bob Ballard, take master music classes from world-renowned instructors or use remote-controlled instruments to dissect a biology specimen from 1,000 miles away," Fox said. "Leveraging Internet2 technology and our vast network of resources and partners throughout the world, the opportunities are endless for students to expand their educational and cultural horizons."

Several Virginia universities are working together with the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Department of Education, and vendor suppliers Sprint and Verizon Business to co-sponsor this initiative. University participants include the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Tech. These institutions are members of the NLR-related Mid Atlantic Terascale Partnership (MATP) together with NASA and the Southeastern Universities Research Association, who also are sponsors. And the Virginia Department of Education is working with Virginia universities to help advance Virginia's K20 National LambdaRail and Internet2 program.

Sprint Nextel (NYSE:S) and Verizon Business provide the advanced network services that make up NetworkVirginia, which offers low-cost broadband network access statewide. For this project, Sprint has contributed a high-speed link that will tie NetworkVirginia to an on-ramp to NLR and Internet2. The advanced network hub node providing that on-ramp is located in McLean and is operated by Virginia Tech on behalf of NLR, MATP, and the NetworkVirginia Internet2 GigaPOP.

"Sprint is committed to enhancing the learning environment and student safety across educational institutions in the country," said Leon Frazier, vice president of public sector for Sprint. "We are very proud of our continued relationship with Virginia Tech and are excited about this new opportunity to provide reliable and secure connectivity for schools, museums and libraries across the state."

Verizon Business is providing local access via NetworkVirginia to the K-12 schools. In addition, Verizon Business is providing direct high-speed broadband connectivity for Mid Atlantic Terascale Partnership to access the National LambdaRail broadband network.

"Whether it is a kindergartner or a high school senior, Virginia students will have access to the latest advances in Internet-based learning at much faster broadband speeds," said Alex Coleman, Group President for Verizon Business Government and Education. "This initiative

will allow students, teachers and local officials to access a wealth of information at major research and higher educational institutions, boosting the overall educational experience throughout the commonwealth."

Virginia 's K20 National LambdaRail and Internet2 program is led by the Institute for Connecting Science Research to the Classroom. Schools, libraries, and museums interested in participating may contact John Wenrich, associate director of the institute, at wenrich@vt.edu, or Jeff Crowder, Virginia Tech Communications Network Services project director, at crowder@vt.edu for more information.

Learn more at:

Institute for Connecting Science Research to the Classroom <http://www.icsrc.org>

National LambdaRail <http://www.nlr.net>

Internet2 <http://www.internet2.edu>

NetworkVirginia <http://www.networkvirginia.net>

Mid Atlantic Terascale Partnership <http://www.midatlantic-terascale.org>

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