

Welcome Back to Campus!

Project Will Extend High-Speed Networking to Latin America

by FLORENCE OLSEN

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Academic researchers worldwide will benefit from a new Internet gateway linking Latin American universities and research facilities to the high-speed research and education networks in the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

The \$30-million backbone network will be operating by the middle of September.

Networking officials at Florida International University in Miami say that initially more than 250 Latin American universities and research institutions will probably use the backbone to connect to *Abilene*, a high-speed research and education network operated by the Internet2 consortium, and to similar networks financed by the National Science Foundation and other U.S. government agencies.

A new consortium called Americas Path, founded by the Miami university and Global Crossing Ltd., an Internet communications company, will provide the high-speed circuits and fiber-optic cable to connect Latin American research facilities to universities around the globe.

Scientists will benefit from the new research link to Latin America in several ways. Astronomers, for example, will be able to use the Gemini South telescope in La Serena, Chile

“without having to travel to Chile,” says Arthur S. Gloster, Chief Information Officer at Florida International. Gemini South produces images that are among the sharpest available to space scientists.

For scientific exchanges with Latin America, researchers up until now have had to rely on satellite and standard Internet connections, which are not adequate, Dr. Gloster says. “There’s not enough bandwidth there for real research.”

Global Crossing, a corporate member of both Internet2 and Americas Path, is installing undersea fiber-optic cable along almost the entire coast of Latin America. Officials say the proximity of the undersea cable to a large set of Internet2 circuits in Miami makes that city a logical site for locating the network gateway to Latin America.

The company also says it will donate 10 very-high-speed circuits for the Internet2 connection to Latin American countries for their use for up to three years. Two other Internet communications companies, Lucent Technologies, Inc. and Cisco Systems, Inc., are providing the high-speed switches and routers, some at no cost, for the Americas Path project. The backbone networking equipment will be housed in Miami’s Technology Center of the Americas.

Latin American universities and research facilities that choose to participate in the Americas Path consortium will pay the consortium both a connection fee and a membership fee, Dr. Gloster says. Internet2 members pay similar fees. Institutions may also have to pay local connection charges.

Greg H. Wood, Director of Communications for the Internet2 consortium, says the new link to Latin America will serve a useful purpose.

“Research and education today are increasingly endeavors that take place across national boundaries,” he says. “Scientists have to collaborate, and teachers and students connect across national boundaries.”

Florida International’s engineering college, which has a joint-degree program with Monterey Tech, in Mexico, is among the academic units that will use the high-speed network, Dr. Gloster says.

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IRM Support Center Grows Up!

Judging from the number of telephone calls now being received—about 400 every week—the IRM Support Center (IRMSC) has evolved into a vital information hub for students, faculty and staff. Three years ago it only received about a third as many calls. With this rapid increase in demand, the Center has increased its staff and opened more lines. It now provides a 24 x 7 help desk for any questions relating to use of University computing or telecommunications resources.

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IRM NEWS

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IRM Reorganizes and Renames Units

Over the summer, several significant changes were made in the organization of Information Resource Management (IRM).

Instructional Technology's Instructional Development Center (IDC) was spun off to University Outreach. The other two units, Broadcast Video Productions and Instructional Photography & Graphics, remain under IRM. Management responsibility for these units has been assigned to Director Betty Bezos so that Administrative Computing's Director, Elizabeth Cobb, can devote more of her time to supervising the implementation of the new Student Information and Human Resources Systems (see story on page 3). Betty will also continue to supervise Academic and Research Computing (ARC), and a new ARC support unit, Information Technology Support Services.

Mr. Al Losada, who formerly reported to Betty, has been promoted to Director and will supervise the Operations & Systems Programming unit, which has been renamed Operations & Enterprise Systems. *

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Operations & Enterprise Systems

Shark System Will Dramatically Improve Data Storage

In about two months, FIU will have a bigger and faster system for storing data. It is called the IBM Enterprise Storage Server (ESS). Currently, data is stored on hard drives attached to individual servers. Managing this data across the more than thirty servers that IRM currently administers is complicated and very time consuming.

The IBM ESS, known as the Shark, is an 880 Gigabyte storage server that will optimize management of much of the data accessible to the University community. The Shark will be implemented in a high speed Storage Area Network (SAN) via optical fiber cabling; this will dramatically increase the speed of servers' access to their data. Once in place, accessing FIU web pages, retrieving streaming video, and accessing E-mail will be faster for everyone.

The Shark allows all the information that is accessed by IRM servers to stay in one place with a high degree of protection against data loss. This protection is achieved by Raid 5 technology. The Shark can literally be

cut in half without any of its data being lost.

The cost for the new Shark storage system is approximately \$380,000. The good thing about this investment is that, although IBM manufactures this product, it is adaptable to any system used at FIU. According to Director of Operations & Enterprise Systems Al Losada, the Shark gives us the freedom to serve storage to any current operating system or platform, as well as any we may have in the future. Most data storage products only offer a one year warranty period. As an added bonus, IBM is providing FIU a three year warranty period.

Another benefit is that the system plan will allow IRM to integrate into the Shark the current storage that is used for the IBM RS6000/SP computer, thus taking advantage of the previous storage investments we have made. The unit is currently capable of being upgraded to an 11.3 Terabyte capacity. This will serve FIU's storage needs for some time to come.

This plan to purchase and implement the Shark system has been in the works for about three months. Operations & Enterprise Systems is very excited to finally bring this new technology to the FIU community. *

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IRM Support Center *continued*

The IRMSC provides Tier 1 and Tier 2 support. Tier 1 support is when a Support Center representative helps you over the phone, and your problem is solved during the call. Tier 2 support is when a representative assigns you a ticket number, and transfers your problem to an appropriate IRM unit to be solved. About 10% of calls are handled on a Tier 1 basis, and we strive to solve 40% of Tier 2 problems within 24 hours.

IRM "reps" are always available on the telephone, but if you prefer, you may submit your problem via the web site at <http://www.fiu.edu/~irmsc>. On the web page, click on "Service Request Form," submit your problem on the form, and it will be handled as quickly as possible.

You can also make an appointment for walk-in consultation during weekday business hours (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) in the IRMSC office in UP, GL-150.

The IRM Support Center is here for you! *

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Summer 2000 Freshman Orientation— Margie Larson, IRM Support Center/AUS supervisor, talks to new students about the fundamentals of FIU E-mail.

Support Center Orients FIU Frosh

Members of the FIU Class of 2004 received a special surprise when they attended orientation this summer— they got FIU E-mail accounts. This is the first time these accounts have been set up and tested during orientation, and the first time all freshman automatically received E-mail accounts.

In addition to helping them with account activation, the IRM Support Center played a key role in showing new students how to use FIU E-mail. On the second day of orientation, freshmen were sent to an E-mail workshop. This was a twenty-minute session that covered the basics of how the E-mail system works and how to access/send FIU E-mail from home.

When the freshmen arrived at the IRM computer labs, they were given a card with their E-mail

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Academic & Research Computing

IRMSC Orients Frosh *continued*

username and password. They were then oriented on Solix, our main E-mail system. Hands-on demonstrations showed them how to access mail from the Solix Pine program, as well as from an Internet browser at home. They were also shown how to get their FIU E-mail forwarded to another Internet Service Provider (AOL, Yahoo, etc.).

IRM/AUS Assistant Director Margie Larson, who supervises the Support Center, feels this new program for freshmen will make it much easier for faculty to communicate with new students from the very first day of classes. In the past, because many students did not have FIU E-mail accounts, but only outside-provider ISP accounts, faculty would have to create special address books for their individual classes or type in each individual student's outside E-mail address in order to send even the first message to their class. With this new system, all the housekeeping is already done and faculty can send class-wide FIU E-mails right off.

Giving freshmen their E-mail accounts during orientation also lets them better take advantage of the information technology (IT) tools and services the University now has for them to use. "At the pace things are going, it is very important that new students be oriented and empowered as soon as possible," Assistant Director for Academic & Research Computing Yogi Misir said.

"The way FIU is embracing technology and the fact that information is being widely disseminated to students electronically, it is crucial that they have appropriate access to IT services..."

One of the primary new goals of the University is to get all students access to the Internet and computing/networking technology. "The way FIU is embracing technology and the fact that information is being widely disseminated to students electronically [see iNET stories in the March and June, 2000 issues of *IRM News*], it is crucial that they have appropriate access to IT services," Misir said.

IRM spent much of the summer preparing Support Center information packets and cards for the freshman class. They were given initial

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CST Hardware Maintenance Ready to Serve You

In today's computer environment, it is important to have a service organization that you can really rely on for computer support. The overall productivity of any department or user depends on the efficiency and the reliability of their computer system. CST Hardware Maintenance provides a quality level of support that is designed to minimize computer downtime. Our philosophy is based on providing our customers with quality service, industry-leading products, and dependability.

All our services can be provided on-site or at our repair facilities located conveniently on the University Park Campus and are available to all faculty, staff, and students of FIU. Some diagnostic services are available at Biscayne Bay Campus, and BayNET Computing (ACI-293) can log your problems and ship your set to us.

Among others, our services include computer system and printer repairs or upgrades for either University-owned equipment or personal home equipment. We are trained to work with most major brands: Dell, IBM, Gateway, HP, Toshiba, and Epson. And, for the do-it-yourself types, individual computer components are available for

purchase. Why go off searching the bargain basement district when you can get anything you need right on campus? And unlike some places, all parts purchases include a warranty and limited technical support.

"CST Hardware Maintenance provides a quality level of support that is designed to minimize computer downtime."

The Computer Support Team's Hardware Maintenance unit is an FIU auxiliary enterprise. Consequently, the department charges for its technical services. A departmental requisition for University equipment or appropriate payment for personal equipment (check or credit card) is required before service can be initiated.

CST Hardware Maintenance is the source for all your computer repair and maintenance needs. For more information, call 305-348-2284 or visit our Internet web site at <http://www.fiu.edu/~maint>. *

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Administrative Computing

New Student and Human Resources Systems

The University issued an RFP for Student and Human Resources system software. The Student system encompasses admission, financial aid, registrar, bursar and other student services functions. The Human Resources system includes payroll, employee benefits, position & rate control, recruitment and other related personnel functions.

A software selection committee is reviewing the six bids that were received. The committee will also include vendor presentations, customer reference checking and customer site visits in its evaluation process. The recommendation of the selection committee will be forwarded to an executive committee that will make the final decision.

The implementation of these new systems should begin early next year. The implementation team will include borrowed staff from the end user and Administrative Computing offices, as well as some new employees. The Human Resources system will "go live" first, and the Student system will "go live" in phases, with Admissions probably being the first phase.

The University has made a multi-million, multi-year commitment to the implementation of these systems. When fully installed, the new systems will provide a more efficient and effective way for the University to conduct business with students, faculty, and staff. *

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Tips & FAQs

TIPS

Q. I am having an off and on problem accessing a web site with my browser, and also with telnet to a host. My friend told me I could isolate this problem with the "ping" command. How do I do this?

A. You can use the ping command to determine whether or not a particular IP address (site or host) exists *and* can currently accept requests.

If the ping is successful (the recipient equipment returns your ping with a message "Reply from.. IP address.." and numerical byte/time data), your problem is not with the network or address you are trying to reach— it has to lie elsewhere with your browser software, loose network cables, etc. If you like, you can also use ping to determine the numerical IP address of an alphabetic URL.

IRMSC Orients Frosh *continued*

orientation and then provided with the IRM Support Center phone number to call in case of any problems. The Support Center has a heavy commitment to making technology more available and usable to students; its phone-in help desk is now there for them 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

FIU's orientation sponsors at both main campuses are very happy with the service IRM has provided this summer. "This service has expressed the importance of FIU communicating with them [students]," BBC Director of Campus Life David Cole said. Director of UP Orientation and Commuter Services Sara Lipman thinks this was a good way to show students the togetherness of the University. "This is a good example of how several departments can work well together and provide a service for the students," Lipman said.

The time has come for real technological advancement, and with the help of IRM, FIU is well on its way to achieving this. *

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To ping a host or site, do the following:

- (1) Establish a connection via dial-up or hardwire.
- (2) Click on 'Start', 'Programs', and 'MS-DOS Prompt'.
- (3) When you see the MS-DOS C:\WINDOWS > prompt, enter:

ping 'site-code'

where 'site-code' may be either the web site URL without the http:/ (e.g., www.fiu.edu), or a host name (e.g., solix.fiu.edu), or an actual IP address (e.g., 131.94.64.35) . *



FIU

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FAQs

University-wide E-mail Facts

Our short *TIPS & FAQs* item on faculty/staff, University-wide E-mail (UNIVMAIL) in the June 2000 issue of *IRM News* seemed to generate as many questions as it answered, so here are a few more things to remember:

Compose an E-mail message exactly as you would like the University Community to see it; this includes both the message body and the subject line. The subject of your message will become the headline seen in the list of message links that are released in the UNIVMAIL list, so please make sure you have a carefully worded and informative line.

Please make sure you include in your E-mail any attachments that you would like to be seen by those who read your UNIVMAIL item. When sending an attachment, please make sure there is a proper link from the body of your message to the attachment.

Make sure you use *Netscape Messenger* to send your E-mail message to UNIVMAIL. We have found that other E-mail applications, such as *Internet Explorer*, do not translate HTML code properly; your message may therefore get distorted when sent.

Once your message has been composed and any attachment(s) have been included, address your message to univmail@fiu.edu. We must receive your message by 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, in order for it to be submitted to UNIVMAIL the same evening. Messages received after 4:30 p.m. will appear in the next weekday evening's UNIVMAIL list.

Only messages sent to UNIVMAIL from an FIU faculty/staff E-mail account can be posted.

If you have any questions about this process, please call the IRM Support Center at 305-348-2284. *

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What's Next ..

- o LOOK FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IN DECEMBER, 2000
- o PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR OWN FIU COMPUTING EXPERIENCES TO irmpubs@fiu.edu FOR PUBLICATION

- o FIU'S NEW E-MAIL SYSTEM
- o TIVOLI SERVICE DESK