Sakai Newsletter

June 2, 2006

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1. The 2006 Sakai Fellows

The Sakai Foundation is pleased to announce the 2006 Sakai Fellows. The Sakai Fellows program seeks to foster community leadership and contribution through recognizing and supporting active contributors. The Sakai Fellows were selected from an outstanding set of nominations of contributors to the Sakai community.

The Sakai Fellows Selected for 2006:

    John Ellis, rSmart
    Johan van der Berg, UNISA
    Ian Boston, Cambridge
    Steven Githens, Northwestern
    Aaron Zeckoski, Virginia Tech
    Zach Thomas, Texas State
    Seth Theriault, Columbia
    Clay Fenlason, Boston University

None of these names come as a surprise to anyone who is involved in the Sakai project -- these folks are the ones who we all count on when something needs to be done quickly and well.

The way Fellows work is that 5% of the membership budget is dedicated to the Fellows program -- so the more members -- the more fellows we have. Each fellow serves a 2-year term, and is awarded $5000 per year to be spent on things like travel, laptops, etc.

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2. Oracle Joins as Sakai Commercial Affiliate

The Sakai Foundation has announced that Oracle has become a Sakai Commercial Affiliate.

Oracle plans to assist in the development of the Sakai code, including soliciting requirements and design concepts from the thousands of institutions using Oracle technology and application products. Oracle expects to provide products and services that can integrate with the open source Sakai software, including Oracle® Collaboration Suite, Oracle Personal Portfolio, Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise Campus Solutions, and PeopleSoft Enterprise Gradebook. In addition, Oracle intends to join key discussion groups and, in the spirit of the open source community, participate in the planning process for Sakai's future product roadmaps.

Sakai is a collaboration and learning environment for use in higher education and research. It provides an application framework and tools for students, instructors, and researchers. A global alliance of universities, colleges, commercial organizations, and individuals, known as the Sakai Community, work in open partnership to design and develop Sakai. The Sakai Commercial Affiliates are companies that provide support for the development of Sakai software, and help support customers using the application. Over 90 universities and institutions around the world have joined the Sakai Foundation, which provides a community and software stewardship for the Sakai and Open Source Portfolio software. Sakai will release version 2.2 in June.

"Sakai welcomes the engagement of Oracle as another significant partner who adds to the growing value of Sakai to higher education. Oracle plays an important role as major a provider of technology and applications software for the Education Industry. We are very pleased that they consider Sakai as a keystone in the learning and research infrastructure for higher education," said Joseph Hardin, Sakai Foundation board chairman from the University of Michigan.

Curtiss Barnes, education industry lead for product strategy at Oracle noted, "When I speak with our customers about the Sakai project, it is increasingly clear that this community can bring about a sea change in the use of IT for academic and research enterprises. Now is the time for an ERP vendor to truly get engaged and help to drive beneficial outcomes for faculty and their students and researchers and their collaborators."

Hardin added, "The Sakai Foundation, its software, and community project were founded on the need to rapidly propagate the innovations in teaching, learning and research that are constantly coming from our faculty, students and learning technologists. Cool tools built at Berkeley or Cambridge should immediately be available to faculty and students at the University of Michigan, indeed to all schools. Building on open source with open standards in an open community makes that possible. Oracle is joining in that effort."

Barnes emphasized that, "embracing Sakai aligns nicely with Oracle's overall strategy for education. We hope our efforts in Sakai will help move the discussion from course delivery to pedagogy, from content to the management of learning outcomes, and from disparate systems to improved processes for managing curricula, research projects and accreditation. The impact of Sakai on the industry is a testament to the vision of the Sakai leadership and the potential for the community to drive significant advances in academic management."

Brad Wheeler, Sakai Foundation vice chairman and Indiana University CIO, said, "Oracle's worldwide customer base in higher education makes them an ideal Sakai Affiliate. They join with a dozen commercial firms that exemplify the complementary value of strong commercial engagement with open source software for the needs of higher ed."

3. Sakai and Workflow Workshop

We are considering the possibilities and implications of Workflow services as enterprise infrastructure, including inter-organizational aspects, across administrative, academic, and research applications. We figure that Sakai, given its support of and connection to many instructional processes, will likely have a role to play in workflow scenarios. We invite Sakai-knowledgeable folks to attend. If there is interest there are still speaking opportunities; contact me if you're interested in that. Thanks.

Advanced CAMP: Workflow Models and Technologies
June 28-30, 2006
Wyndham Burlington, Burlington, VT
http://www.educause.edu/CAMP063

- RL "Bob" Morgan

4. Appalachian College Association Selects Longsight for Sakai Services

The Appalachian College Association has selected The Longsight Group to provide Sakai hosting and support services as part of a new consortial initiative. The ACA conducts many initiatives to support its members, none more significant than its Learning Asset Management Project (LAMP).

"LAMP uses technology to facilitate collaboration between member colleges, to link the bundle of sticks," said Martin Ramsay, Chief Instructional Technologist for the Appalachian College Association. The ACA had been providing a shared instance of WebCT Vista to its members, but wanted to move to a more collaborative, open source platform and selected Sakai. "We also wanted to partner with a company that would host Sakai for us that understood our challenges. Longsight was just the company we were looking for. Longsight understands higher education. They understand open source. Most importantly, they understand collaboration. The folks at Longsight have been a joy to work with."

Central Appalachia is a region of the US that is isolated geographically and challenged by higher unemployment, lower high school and college graduation rates, and higher poverty than national averages. It is here, in the mountainous regions of Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina that the Appalachian College Association, a consortium representing 35 private, liberal arts colleges and universities, tries to make a difference for the 39,000 students on its member campuses. "We like to use the analogy of a bundle of sticks," said Ramsay. "Individually, a stick can be broken, but, bundled together with other sticks, it can be a strong and resilient force. That's what we try to do for our member schools - help them work together like a bundle of sticks."

The LAMP initiative at the ACA has been live since the April 28. "Longsight has been with us every step of the way," said Ramsay. "The Longsight team helped us configure Sakai to our specifications and provided our initial training. Even better, we have similar working styles. We both believe strongly in collaboration and in the open source philosophy. Longsight has been the ideal partner for us in our LAMP initiative."

The Appalachian College Association is headquartered in Berea, Kentucky and online at http://www.acaweb.org

You can learn more about open source support services from The Longsight Group at http://longsight.com For further information, please contact information@longsight.com or call 740-599-5005.

5. Unicon's New Academus Open Campus Offers Easy Startup Options for Sakai's Collaboration and Learning Environment

Site Offers Access to Test Drives, Pilot Projects, Custom Hosted Solutions & Full-Scale Implementations

Unicon, Inc., the leading independent provider of enterprise portal, collaboration, learning, and integration technology for higher education institutions, has announced its new Academus Open Campus (AOC) Portal featuring the latest in Sakai's Collaboration and Learning Environment technologies.   The new site is designed to provide academic administrators, faculty, and IT personnel with a variety of low cost and low risk options for quickly evaluating and deploying the latest open source technologies from Sakai and other vendors. The new site is located at www.academusopencampus.com.

"Higher Ed has the daunting challenge of choosing the right technologies to increase the capacity of their online services while maintaining finite resources," stated John C. Blakely, CEO of Unicon, Inc. "Our Academus Open Campus makes those choices easier by providing a variety of scalable options for testing and implementing the latest open-community online learning management solutions."

Academus Open Campus:
Is education's most comprehensive portal for testing and evaluating open source technologies from Sakai, uPortal, and other vendors. AOC also provides an excellent hosted environment for institutions wanting the benefits of lowered costs for hardware, software, and IT support. AOC's highlighted areas include:

Sakai Test Drive
The "Sakai Test Drive" program is designed to provide educational instructors and IT personnel with a risk-free, zero-cost program to evaluate Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment without incurring licensing fees, development/maintenance time and resources, or hardware purchases.

Pilot Sakai Project
The innovative and affordable Pilot Sakai program allows colleges and universities to easily develop, run, and evaluate a fully-functional Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment for its students on a per quarter or semester basis. A twenty-student environment (www.pilotsakai.com) can be operational in one business day for the total price of $185 for a six-month program.

Elluminate Virtual Classroom
Elluminate Live!® Lite Office™ is included in the Academus Open Campus offering, providing a single-room, personal-sized virtual classroom with whiteboard, two-way audio, text messaging, and participant information modules. More info at: www.elluminate.com.

6. rSmart Launches rSmart Sakai CLE

rSmart, the prime source of commercial open source applications for education, has announced the availability of the first and only commercial distribution of Sakai, rSmart Sakai CLE, today at the 5th Sakai Conference taking place in Vancouver, British Columbia. The rSmart Sakai CLE enables educational institutions to realize the benefits of open source innovation by offering the comprehensive support and services required when implementing enterprise software on campus.

In much the same way that Red Hat offers its Red Hat Enterprise Linux solution while contributing to the Linux community, rSmart offers its rSmart Sakai CLE as a fully supported version of Sakai.

"This release of rSmart Sakai CLE is a defining milestone in the evolution of Sakai as the future of collaborative learning," said Ray Barker, Chief Executive Officer at rSmart. "The rSmart Sakai CLE marks a significant advance of Sakai in the education enterprise. This application has the performance -- and most importantly the dedicated commercial support– needed to make Sakai the sensible choice for every institution, from the smallest private colleges to the largest public universities. Like Red Hat Enterprise Linux this supported delivery of innovation at a reasonable price creates unprecedented value for our customers."

The rSmart Sakai CLE offers a new choice to all educational institutions at a time when the ongoing consolidation of a few highly proprietary vendors have left the market with few alternatives. The open source model spreads the cost of software development across the community –eliminating the need for one time license fees –and allows rSmart to focus on providing high quality software and support at a fraction of the cost of proprietary vendors.

rSmart has made a concerted effort to improve, enhance and refine the user experience. Key aspects of the rSmart Sakai CLE include:

- A rationale for distinctions between site types, user types, roles, permissions, system access, tool presentation, categorization and display (i.e. who sees what, when and why in the interface)
- Updated and revised documentation includes role-related support cues on the screen
- A new Gateway page and an interface that's visually appealing

"I would categorize these changes as technical, functional and aesthetic. We've taken the time to figure out how this collection, which now numbers over 33 distinct tools, should work together, to test it and to package it in a way that's flexible enough to support a wide variety of different user populations," said Hannah Reeves Senior Educational Consultant for rSmart.

The rSmart Sakai CLE is now available. For more information please visit www.rsmart.com.

7. Events

JA-SIG Summer Conference
13th Semiannual meeting
June 4-6, 2006
www.ja-sig.org/conferences/06summer

4th IMS Global Learning Consortium Advanced Learning Technology conference
Indianapolis, Indiana
June 19-22, 2006
http://www.imsglobal.org/altilab2006/

Advanced CAMP: Workflow Models and Technologies
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Wyndham Burlington, Burlington, VT
http://www.educause.edu/CAMP063

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and the Coalition for Networked
Information (CNI)
6th International Meeting
York Moat House Hotel, York
July 6-7, 2006
http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/events/jisc-cni-2006/

1st European Sakai Day
Luebeck, Germany
September 6-7, 2006
http://www.oncampus.de/sakai