



Sakai Newsletter

May 1, 2008

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1. From the Executive Director

Greetings,

As we approach the 9th Sakai conference this July, I wanted to give an update on our overall plans for conferences. This has been communicated in bits and pieces along the way but a few recent miscommunications indicate that it would be good to get it all down in one place.

We are moving to one "International Community" conference annually. There are a few reasons for this. First, given the historical model of complimentary registrations for Sakai Foundation members and conferences held at nice hotels, the economics of two conferences a year were unsustainable. Second, the travel time and expense for community members was taxing and, in the long run, unsustainable. Third, the

organization of two major conferences a year has meant that the Sakai Foundation staff spends a large amount of their time and effort on these conferences, leaving less time for other equally valuable activities. Finally, the growth of the community has made it possible to organize vibrant regional conferences (as ably demonstrated over the past year in California, Australia, Japan and China), giving folks more opportunities to get together and talk Sakai.

This annual international conference will change continents each year (the "international" moniker is intended to indicate that we would like to attract people from around the globe and that the conference itself moves from place to place). This year, obviously, we are in Europe. In June 2009 we anticipate being in the eastern half of the United States or Canada. In 2010 we don't know, but likely not in North America. Given current Sakai usage patterns Europe, South Africa and Australia would all be interesting locations. And Kajita-san from Nagoya suggested that Hawaii would be a good compromise for the North American and Pacific Rim participants (I like his thinking!).

At the same time we are experimenting with the Paris conference by hosting most of it at a university (UPMC). Hosting the conference at a university not only saves us money but, I think, is in the spirit of the Sakai community. This will undoubtedly lead to some differences from past conferences, not the least of which is that the hotel is some distance from the meeting spaces. We're working to make sure the experience, while different, is just as rewarding as you've come to expect. Certainly being in one of the world's most interesting cities should help! If this works we will try to continue it for future conferences, although we are certainly flexible about this.

Given the new expectation of one International Community Conference per year, it is a good time for everyone (especially those of us in North America) to think about organizing regional meetings. These meetings could focus around specific topics and have a greater allocation of time for getting work done rather than making/attending presentations.

So if you find yourself wishing the next Sakai conference would be sooner than June 2009, it's time to propose organizing a meeting in your region. I'm suggesting a set of regional meetings occur this November or December (Eastern US, Western US, Europe, South Africa, Australia, Japan, China, Brazil?). The Sakai Foundation can help get it organized (and may be able to supply some funding as well), but we would like the community to take the lead on the topics, dates and locations.

Best regards,

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2. rSmart Wins IBM Beacon Award for Innovation Excellence in Education

rSmart has been named winner of the award for "Innovation Excellence in Education" in the annual IBM Beacon Awards competition, honoring IBM Business Partners for their ingenuity, innovation, customer satisfaction and outstanding achievements in providing business solutions.

rSmart provides the rSmart Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE), which supports online teaching, learning, research projects, portfolios, and more. The solution integrates IBM WebSphere Application Server and DB2 and runs on Linux, with implementation services from IBM Global Business Services.

Being based on open source software, the rSmart Sakai CLE is designed to enable institutions to provide new innovations in course management and collaboration to their constituents at lower costs without vendor lock-in. rSmart customers report saving as much as 40 percent of what they were paying for comparable solutions. Other benefits include more rapid innovation cycles, lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), flexibility to customize the application, supported community innovations with a trusted partner, lower risks of using an open source solution, predictable annual support and maintenance costs, ease of integration, and less potential for vendor lock-in.

Judges remarked that, "rSmart demonstrates innovation excellence in open and aligned learning. Its services are well respected in the global higher education market and meet the pain points associated with vendor lock-in, such as rising costs and product development."

"As an IBM Beacon Award winner, rSmart has been recognized as an outstanding contributor to innovative online solutions for the education industry," said Ravi Marwaha, general manager, IBM Global Business Partners. "Its open-source solution for open and aligned learning gives educators a cost-effective and innovative solution that helps overcome the challenges of decreased funding and changing student expectations."

"rSmart is pleased to receive the IBM Beacon Award recognizing the value we deliver with the rSmart Sakai CLE," said Chris Coppola, president of rSmart. "Our Sakai offerings enable educational institutions to benefit from the freedom and innovations of open source while enjoying the reliability of an accountable partner. Education is being asked to do more with less. With rSmart's supported open source solutions, colleges and universities can accomplish this."

About IBM Beacon Awards -- More than 725 nominations were judged by a team of leading industry journalists, analysts, and IBM executives, who selected winner and finalists in 37 award categories. These IBM Business Partners are being honored during a

gala event at the IBM Business Partner Leadership Conference in Los Angeles on April 30 - May 2, 2008. For more information about the IBM Beacon Awards, please visit: http://www-1.ibm.com/partnerworld/pwhome.nsf/weblook/2008_awards.html.

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3. Saginaw Valley State Adopts Sakai, Joins Foundation

Saginaw Valley State University is pleased to announce its completed transition to the Sakai CLE as the institution's online learning and portfolio system. We began in 2005 with an experimental OSP pilot, then opened a Sakai-OSP setup to the campus in spring 2006. Now, we have migrated over 2700 course sites and over 200 non-academic projects (clubs, orgs, committees, department sites) to "VSpace" (our Sakai brand). Additionally, we manage programmatic assessment for several departments utilizing some OSP tools. Our stack always blends Sakai core, provisional, contrib., and Foothill tools to produce a rich learning environment and provide a flexible framework for digital portfolio opportunities. When combined as such, the suite is flexible, powerful, and stable for us. This is all possible in one cohesive system due to the Sakai Project and its enthusiastic and hardworking participants.

We are also proud to become one of the newest Sakai Educational Partners for the next three years and look forward to continued fruitful collaboration within this open community. The innovation advancements here are difficult to keep up with, but it is loads of fun trying. We aim to pitch into future efforts surrounding migration, archiving, and importing processes, and to become more active in QA testing of Sakai release code.

Blackboard's BASIC learning system served SVSU since 2000 and will be unplugged on May 14, 2008 (in just a few weeks!). Primary motivators to migrate to an open-source system were to customize and enhance the feature set and functionality, secure our LMS server, and unify authentication and integration with other systems. All of that was not possible without contracting one or more of Blackboard's enterprise-level offerings.

Special thanks go out to Noah Botimer, who built our first few Sakai forks and taught us how to manage the code. We also send our gratitude to Vivie Sinou and the Foothill de Anza team for their extensive work on JForum, Melete, and, recently, Mneme.

The generousities extended to us via this list, Confluence pages, email advice, JIRA details, future version road maps, excellent conferences, shared tip sheets and tutorials, and countless words of caution and wisdom have been priceless. A global network of support has proven to be far more rewarding and effective than a contracted support professional hailing from a stale corporate office.

If anyone would like to discuss migration practices, processes, or just banter about how we pulled this off at a small state university, feel free to contact me. I'd be happy to discuss it.

Thanks to all of you. We couldn't have done it without you.

Sincerely,

Dan, Jake, Bob, Leah
SVSU Sakai Team

Dan Tyger
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4. Georgia Tech Contracts with Unicon to Develop CalDAV Support in Sakai

Unicon, Inc. has announced that Georgia Tech has contracted with their company for a development project to implement the CalDAV standard protocol for the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment. CalDAV is an industry standard protocol for sharing calendar events, meetings, and appointments across different platforms and calendar applications. Once the CalDAV protocol is available, Sakai will be able to publish calendar events to enterprise calendar applications such as Zimbra, Bedework, or other applications that support CalDAV. Additionally, events created in Sakai under CalDAV will be able to be managed and modified in Zimbra, or other CalDAV-supported applications, with the changes reflected back into the Sakai Calendar.

"The addition of CalDAV support introduces one more way in which Sakai can be a team player amidst other enterprise applications," said Clay Fenlason, Director of Educational Technology for Georgia Tech. "Doing this work in the open brings real benefit to the Sakai Community while at the same time positioning the result for further enhancement from that community. It's a great example of how the 'gift economy' of Community Source continues to drive us forward."

"It's thrilling to see support for another open standard in Sakai. Even more impressive, though, is the leadership that Georgia Tech and Unicon are showing in ensuring this project is built to benefit the entire Sakai community," said Michael Korcuska, executive director for the Sakai Foundation. "In the long run, I'm sure Georgia Tech will benefit from this approach as more community members make contributions to advancing CalDAV support in Sakai."

About CalDAV -- CalDAV is a protocol allowing calendar access via WebDAV. CalDAV models calendar events as HTTP resources in iCalendar format, and models

calendars containing events as WebDAV collections. This allows users to publish and subscribe to calendars, share them collaboratively, synchronize between multiple users and synchronize between multiple devices. The CalDAV protocol home page (<http://ietf.osafoundation.org/caldav/>), created and maintained by the authors of CalDAV, contains links to specifications, mailing lists, implementations and other items useful to implementers and users of CalDAV.

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5. From Nicolaas Matthijs -- MySakai & Client Side Development: Blog

Dear community,

I just wanted to share my development blog (<http://nicolaasm Matthijs.wordpress.com/>) about the MySakai things we have been doing at Cambridge. The first part (October - December 2007) talks about the MySakai widgets for FaceBook, iGoogle, Google Desktop, Vista Sidebar, Mac DashBoard, ... Other information about these widgets can be found at <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MYSAK/>.

The second part of this development blog (Christmas 2007 - Still in progress) talks about the MyCamTools things we have been doing. MyCamTools is, for the people that haven't seen it yet, a first step in trying to improve the User Experience for the Cambridge users, and is also a proof of concept of what can be achieved using client side development. This development is based on HTML + JSON + JavaScript and is being fed by the SData service and has proven to be remarkably quicker in terms of time and gives us more flexibility. This allowed us to get out to users in shorter cycles.

One interesting example of that is the development we have done for an alternative membership tool. This tool, design + data services + implementation, has taken exactly 1 day to develop (<http://nicolaasm Matthijs.wordpress.com/2008/03/21/new-membership-tool-21-march-2008/>).

The current version of MyCamTools can be found at <http://mycamtools.caret.cam.ac.uk> . If you don't have a login, just send me an email and I'll create an account for you.

Because trying to improve the User Experience of Sakai was and still is one of our main goals at Cambridge, we will also be closely involved in the implementation of Nathan's UX Project. This client side development methodology MIGHT be used as a (quick) way to implement Nathan's designs in order to get it out for user testing in short cycles.

If you have any remarks or questions, please let me know.

P.S.: This blog will also appear on Planet Sakai.

Kind regards,

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6. Sakai "Hackathon" at the Sakai Conference in Paris

The folks from CARET at Cambridge University are interested in hosting a Sakai "Hackathon" during the week following the Sakai Conference in Paris. The specific goals and activities have yet to be determined but, given the location, you can expect JCR, RSF and client-side AJAX with JSON to be present. This will not be a conference. It is a working session and a great opportunity to work side-by-side with your colleagues around the globe. Cambridge is easy to get to from Paris via plane or, better yet, the Chunnel (followed by a quick tube ride and a nice train through the countryside).

CARET has room for approximately 20 people and the Sakai Foundation can help with additional space if there is sufficient interest. There also should be affordable housing available in the dormitories. A wiki page has been started. Add your name if you plan to participate. <http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/MYBFAQ>

7. rSmart Launches rSmart Sakai CLE 2.5

rSmart has announced the availability of the rSmart Sakai CLE 2.5 at the JA-SIG open source conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This represents the newest version of the industry's first and only commercial distribution of the open source Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE). This milestone release comes early enough in the academic year that institutions considering a new learning management system can adopt Sakai in time for Fall semester.

The rSmart Sakai CLE is the company's fully packaged, tested and supported distribution of the Sakai software. Similar to the way RedHat™ distributes and supports the Linux™ operating system, rSmart distributes and supports Sakai. The CLE provides a feature-rich, fully scalable, enterprise ready software application that is unique in its ability to support teaching and learning, project collaboration, group interaction and ePortfolio construction. It offers an open source collaboration environment that is polished, customizable and fully supported by an accountable partner -- rSmart. The company also provides professional services including Sakai assessment and planning, training,

installation, integration and data migration, customization and application hosting to compliment its support offerings.

"More institutions are finding that the rSmart Sakai CLE 2.5 is a highly cost effective alternative to their older Blackboard™ or WebCT™ systems," stated Chris Coppola, president of rSmart. "Institutions owe it to themselves to take a look at Sakai, or look at it again if they saw it years ago. It is amazing how advanced the software has become in such a short time."

With over 30 educational institutions using rSmart Sakai CLE as the basis of their eLearning, ePortfolio, and online collaboration activities, rSmart is helping grow the number of Sakai users worldwide. Sakai, in use at more than 200 institutions globally, can be easily adopted by institutions with few to no IT resources through rSmart's packaging, hosting and support services.

"Given our available resources it would be difficult for us to effectively use Sakai without using the rSmart Sakai CLE. With rSmart supporting us we benefit from the many innovations being driven by the Sakai community while allowing our few academic computing resources to focus on faculty and student support instead of technical support," said M.L. Bettino, Dean of Academic Affairs, at Cerritos College. "We are looking forward to upgrading to the new release because of the many new features and enhancements being delivered."

The rSmart Sakai CLE 2.5 is available for hosted or on-site deployments immediately. To experience rSmart Sakai CLE 2.5 please visit <http://www.sakaisandbox.com> to sign up for a free account or download a full, easy-to-install version directly from rSmart's website.

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8. Michael Wesch to Speak at Online Educa Berlin 2008

Online Educa Berlin 2008 (December 3 - 4) welcomes Michael Wesch as a keynote speaker. Michael Wesch is Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Kansas State University, USA. In his work he explores the impacts of new media on human interaction. Wesch is well known for his groundbreaking work in digital ethnography, and he is also active in developing innovative teaching techniques. For more information: info@online-educa.com, www.online-educa.com

9. Unicon Contributes Sakai Enhancements Developed from Cooperative Support Program

Unicon, Inc. has announced that it has contributed a number of new development enhancements for the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment to the open source Sakai community. The new feature enhancements apply to identity and attribute management, extensions to the JLDAP UserDirectory/Provider, and SIS (student information system) integration configuration options.

The enhancements for Sakai were developed under Unicon's Cooperative Support Program, a commercial support program that provides member institutions with many benefits including a predictable cost support solution. The program provides a dedicated team of expert development and technical support specialists for Sakai for direct technical support and assistance. All development work and fixes performed by the team for individual institutions are contributed back and shared with the Sakai community.

About Unicon's Cooperative Support Program -- Participation in the program requires an annual subscription fee that enables institutions to access the support services and also funds a dedicated support and development team. Support issues are managed on a priority basis with guaranteed service level agreements and an escalation mechanism top priority issues. All development work performed by the team will be done in direct participation with the community source Sakai project. The Cooperative Support Program for Sakai is a strong complement to Unicon's other services for Sakai which include various bundles comprised of implementation, project planning, installation, configuration, branding, and training components.

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10. Elluminate and Unicon Contribute Sakai/Elluminate Tool to the Sakai Community

Unicon, Inc. has announced the immediate availability of a software tool to integrate Elluminate Live! with the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE). The integration tool, co-developed by Unicon, Inc. and Elluminate, Inc., is designed to enable academic institutions using Sakai to easily and seamlessly integrate live, synchronous distance learning and collaboration into their coursework. The companies have contributed the Sakai/Elluminate integration tool to the Sakai open source community. The source code is available at:<https://source.sakaiproject.org/contrib/unicon/lluminate/>.

"At Elluminate, we understand that it is important to meet customer requirements, including those for open source integration," said Maurice Heiblum, President of

Illuminate. "We are extremely pleased to partner with Unicon to provide access for Sakai users to a real-time instruction delivery solution that easily duplicates any learning activity, from lectures and presentations to small group discussions and debates."

"Unicon enjoys its professional and collaborative relationship with Illuminate and this latest integration of their technology will provide added value functionality to the Sakai community," said John C. Blakley, CEO of Unicon, Inc. "This donation represents a healthy trend from commercial software vendors to increase the integration and functionality between their applications and the open source world."

- The Sakai/Illuminate tool enables Sakai Instructors to create, edit, and delete Illuminate sessions from within Sakai.
- Illuminate sessions can be scheduled for a day, week, or month, with reoccurrence as needed.
- It allows students to see and access Illuminate session details from within their Sakai calendar.

About Illuminate, Inc. -- Illuminate, Inc. provides solutions for real-time online learning and collaboration that deliver exceptional outcomes, including enhanced learning experiences, increased retention and completion rates, and higher ROI. Illuminate Live! features high-quality voice over the Internet, robust interactive functionality, and unique No User Left Behind™ technology that supports multiple platforms and low-bandwidth connectivity. Illuminate has served more than 300 million web-collaboration minutes to over 3 million teachers and students located in 185 different countries. For more information, visit <http://www.illuminate.com>.

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11. Two Indiana University Job Openings for Principal Systems Analysts

Job Title: Principal Systems Analyst, PAE4IT

Department: University Information Technology Services

Position Summary: Works independently to provide highly specialized expertise in the evaluation and design of major new customer applications development, services and technological solutions, which include system and software integration techniques, systems design, development, testing, installation and implementation of computer applications serving the entire university; provides technical standards, consulting, leadership, guidance and training for a variety of applications to other analyst/programmers. Leads projects to analyze functional requirements, document processes, determine system specifications, design solutions, and implement critical system applications while maintaining production standards. Coordinates projects and

participates in planning sessions and ad-hoc committees; assists in the training of support staff and serves as client consultant; serves as a resource for the staff for information technology and technical expertise. Possesses excellent knowledge in the areas of planning, organizing, scheduling, and project coordination and implementation. Serves as a resource for problem analysis and resolution. Serves as client consultant to provide technical expertise. Serves as interface to user departments and provides technical supervision on selected projects. Attends meetings as required.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities Required: Baccalaureate Degree plus minimum of 5 years of experience in computing or information technology required; a combination of education and experience may be considered in a 2:1 ratio. Capable of developing an information systems strategy, implementing, training, and maximizing effective technologies. Broad based information processing experience required in all areas of computing. Ability to assume project leadership for information system projects, and work at the highest level of technical complexity. High level of accuracy, dependability and responsibility are very essential.

Experience with the following technologies and applications is required: Unix and Windows environments, scripting languages, SQL, and relational database structures. Knowledgeable in a variety of software and hardware; competent in using and navigating Wintel and UNIX operating Systems; experienced with relational databases, J2EE, EJB, and statistical packages required; Open source project experience very helpful; working knowledge of high scale and volume client/server environment functionality required. Applicant must have experience in systems development with a solid concentration in Unix and Windows environment. Applicant should have an excellent understanding of Java J2EE, and experience developing network applications using a variety of programming languages, such as Java, JavaScript, C++, perl, etc. Experience with Oracle or other SQL databases, XML, and HTTP servers is a plus. Expert Java J2EE experience is strongly desired. Experience in distributed computing and network systems is preferred.

Able to operate effectively in a complex and dynamic environment; capable of functioning as project leader and able to lead ad-hoc committees; must have knowledge and practical experience with project management tools and application development methodologies. Demonstrated oral, written and presentation skills, with the ability to explain technical concepts to non-technical audiences. Strong analytical and problem solving skills; ability to manage and guide a complex range of functions and relationships within teams and departments for the entire university; capable of working with staff, faculty and university departments.

Interested applicants must apply through the online application system available at: <https://www.hra.iupui.edu>. Please refer to position #00032921 or #00032920 when applying.

12. Recent Email Group Discussions

Here are some topics that have been discussed in the last couple of weeks in Sakai email groups. Most of these discussions can be found at these Nabble URLs:

- Sakai-dev - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Development-f18040.html> (DEV)
- Sakai Portfolio - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Portfolio-f18155.html> (PORT)
- Sakai Pedagogy - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Pedagogy-f24248.html> (PED)
- Sakai UI - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---User-Interaction-f25634.html> (UI)
- Sakai Migration - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai-Migration-Group-f27621.html> (MIG)
- Sakai Announcements - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Announce-f28489.html> (ANN)

To join an email group, go to <http://www.collab.sakaiproject.org>. While you are in your workspace, click the "Membership" link in the left-hand menu and then click the "Joinable Sites" link. Click "Join" next to any of the groups.

Discussions:

2-5-x doesn't compile DEV
Add user logged-in status to SkinnableCharonPortal.startPageContext() DEV
adding fields on user DEV
Additional authz methods for efficiently accessing multiple groups DEV
Arbitrary logout page DEV
Creative uses of Outline Options Form? PORT
Dependency based maven build DEV
email archive - why 2 email addresses DEV, UX
Fools rushing in PORT
forums USER
Getting Search to Start DEV
gradebook build error DEV
Kernel Experiment DEV
leveraging Sakai for alumni associations USER
Long data source question DEV
Mail tool PORT
Mneme Test Center - timer bug? DEV
Nested Form XSD question PORT
New proposal for consideration on confluence: Matrix and Wizard Defaults and Cell-level Access Control PORT
newbie-to-be question PORT
OSP 2-5 upgrade issue: No org.sakaiproject.coursemanagement.api.Section found with id 2005,FALL,SMPL,001,001 PORT
OSP Alteration DEV PORT
Participate in a Teaching Commons WebEvent PED

permissions on form-entry 'uploads'? [xs:anyURI] PORT
Problem importing end note files into resources DEV
Problem with Resource Tool DEV
Problems with assignments tool? USER
SAK-12837 - 2-5-x and legacy discussion DEV
SAK-13406 Singularity of Feedback PORT Sakai discussion board issue PED
SCORM packages in Sakai DEV Site Info group control enhancement PORT
Sites with > 1000 groups in Oracle DEV
Spring inject values from ServerConfigurationService? DEV
SpringSource Application Platform DEV
use of finalize method in Sakai DEV
UX Design - Improving the CLE v1.0 - Week 6!! PORT, USER

10. Events

2nd Annual Pan-American and Francophone ePortfolio and Digital Identity
Conference May 5 -7, 2008
Montreal, Quebec Canada
<http://events.eife-l.org/ilearn2008/conference>

IMS Learning Impact Conference
May 12-15, 2008
Omni Downtown Austin
Austin, Texas
<http://www.imsglobal.org/learningimpact2008/agenda.html>

Kuali Days VI
May 13 -14, 2008
Westin Chicago Northwest
Chicago, Illinois
www.kuali.org

eLearning Africa 2008
May 28 - 30, 2008
Accra International Conference Centre Accra, Ghana
<http://www.elearning-africa.com>

Portal 2008 "Measurement & Assessment" Conference
Gettysburg College
June 3-6, 2008
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA
<https://biz.gettysburg.edu/it/portal08/index.cfm>

CANHEIT 2008 Canadian Higher Education and Information Technology
Conference

June 15-18, 2008

Calgary, Alberta Canada

<http://canheit.ucalgary.ca/>

2-3-98 Conference: An Open Discussion on Technology in Education

SUNY Delhi

June 19-20, 2008

Delhi, New York

<https://snydelwd.delhi.edu:8443/display/ODD/2-3-98+Conference>

EUNIS 2008 European University Information Systems Organisation

June 24-27, 2008

Århus, Denmark

<http://eunis.dk/>

9th Sakai Conference

Université Pierre et Marie Curie

July 1 - 3, 2008

Paris, France

<https://sakai.educonference.com/paris/index.php>

ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN 2008

14th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning and Training

December 3 - 5 , 2008

Hotel InterContinental Berlin

Berlin, Germany

www.online-educa.com