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## SAKAI CONFERENCE

### THE 10<sup>th</sup> SAKAI CONFERENCE

The global Sakai community will be in Boston this year for the Sakai conference.

Pre-conference Sessions:  
**July 7<sup>th</sup>**

Conference Sessions:  
**July 8<sup>th</sup> – July 10<sup>th</sup>**



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 29, 2009 – This is the first installment of a Sakai Executive Brief that the Sakai Foundation plans to publish every 6 months. It is focused on providing organizational managers and executives with a brief overview of what has been and what will be happening in Sakai. I hope you find the information useful to understanding the current state of Sakai development, what is taking place in the Sakai community, and how your institution can further engage in our efforts to make Sakai the premier academic collaboration and learning environment.

These executive briefs are an important component of an increased focus on communication at the foundation. Formal communication channels have become increasingly important as we now hold conferences approximately every 12 months. Early efforts to develop Sakai 3 – a completely new version of Sakai – increase the importance of understanding what is happening in Sakai and how you can participate and benefit.

You'll be seeing a variety of new ways to get information and provide feedback to the Sakai Foundation in the coming weeks and months. In particular, I'd love to hear what you'd like to see addressed in these executive briefs and in other forms of communication. You can always reach me at [mkorcuska@sakaifoundation.org](mailto:mkorcuska@sakaifoundation.org), and I'd be happy to schedule a phone call at a mutually convenient time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Korcуска".

Michael Korcуска  
Executive Director  
Sakai Foundation

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### SAKAI BY THE NUMBERS

Production Sites	160
Pilot Implementations	140
Continents	7



## THE SAKAI COMMUNITY

### Substantial, Global and Diverse

The Sakai community is growing in size, diversity and engagement. The Sakai Project began as a Mellon-funded collaboration in the fall of 2003. In the project's first year, 50 institutions committed to the project. Since then, institutional participation has continued to increase steadily and significantly.

### Providing a Range of Support Models

The diversity of our community has created a broad range of implementation and support needs. The Sakai commercial affiliates contribute to addressing those needs. They bring new institutions into the community, create diverse support models and extend the implementation and impact of the Sakai CLE among community institutions. Our commercial affiliates provide a wide range of products, services and skills to support your institution.

### Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Research

The breadth and depth of the Sakai community inspires enhanced teaching, learning and research in many ways. Our community efforts to share research, teaching and learning best practices continue to grow. We welcome participation in these groups from faculty members and leaders within your institutional community.

In an effort to highlight and share these enhancements, annual awards recognize those who demonstrate creativity and innovation using Sakai. Recently, the 2009 Teaching with Sakai Innovation Award winners were announced. First place was awarded to Dr. Andrea Cramp-ton at Charles Sturt University, second place was awarded to Dr. Edith Sheffer at Stanford University, and honorable mentions were made of Cherry Stewart at the University of New England and Dr. Mark Van Dyke at Marist College. Award winners will present their work at the upcoming Sakai Conference.

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### RESOURCES

Community Sharing of Best Practices  
in Teaching and Learning:

<http://www.OpenEdPractices.org>

Sakai Commercial Affiliate Descriptions:

<http://tinyurl.com/http-sakaiproject-org-comaff>

2009 Teaching with Sakai Innovation Award  
Winners: <http://openedpractices.org/twsia>



### The 10<sup>th</sup> Sakai Conference

The global Sakai community will be in Boston this year for the Sakai conference. The 10<sup>th</sup> Sakai conference runs from Wednesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> to Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, with pre-conference sessions taking place on Tuesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>. Session track topics for this year's conference include building Sakai, deploying Sakai, and using Sakai. Additionally, one session track is devoted to showcasing new and re-factored Sakai tools and services through interactive media that provide a snapshot of community-source software development in action. This is a tremendous opportunity for your staff to share and learn from innovations and experiences across the community.

If you would like more information regarding the 10<sup>th</sup> Sakai conference, please visit <https://educonference.com/sakai/boston/index.php>.

### New Sakai Resources

Community members are constantly creating resources that support the Sakai product. The following are some excellent examples:

- Indiana University has contributed training materials and over 60 flash tutorials: <http://oncourse.iu.edu/info>.
- rSmart has contributed a series of case studies that highlight successful and innovative uses of Sakai: <http://tinyurl.com/http-sakaiproject-org-cs>.
- OpenEd Practices contains a wide range of rubric and faculty resources being used across the community: <http://openedpractices.org/resources>.

### Planning for 2010 and Beyond

The Sakai community faces an important opportunity in developing the next generation of Sakai, while continuing to enhance and improve the Sakai 2.x platform. Over the next several months, the Sakai Foundation will work with institutions in the Sakai community to fully staff both development and support needs. We'll be holding webinars and providing additional communication in advance of the Sakai Conference. Please watch the Sakai Announcements list for more information.

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### RESOURCES

Product Development Cycle Whitepaper:  
<http://tinyurl.com/DownloadProductDevelopmentWP>

Product Development Process Webinar:  
<http://www.screencast.com/t/lsg6iM2WKqy>



## THE SAKAI FOUNDATION

The Sakai Foundation board recently conducted a 2-day retreat that was focused on defining the strategic direction for the Sakai Foundation, especially with regard to how the foundation should use its resources to support the Sakai community development process. Over the last few months, we have been working on recommendations for improving the development process and making corresponding changes to several staff positions at the foundation.

### THE SAKAI DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Sakai Foundation has been looking for ways to increase visibility and predictability into the product roadmap. To this end we will adopt a more structured development process. The new process seeks to support the breadth of innovation that characterizes a very organic process, while providing increased structure and predictability needed to support a reliable, high-quality release. The product development process is built around five distinct phases in the Sakai product life cycle. Significant new additions to Sakai functionality will progress through each of these stages.

#### Research & Development

The Research and Development Phase of the product development cycle is organic; development needs or desires are identified and projects are undertaken without approval or decision-making from a central authority. Thus, this stage fosters independent creativity and a breadth of new opportunities.

#### Incubation

Incubation is a new and important step in the development process and is required for projects that are ultimately intended for a Sakai release. The goals of the incubation stage are to improve our ability to meet user needs and reduce development risk. In this phase we prove desirability to the community, formalize project requirements, assemble a cross-institutional development team that includes functional expertise, and build a project and maintenance plan. The Sakai Foundation is adding a new full-time role, Sakai Product Manager, to shepherd projects through the incubation stage.

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#### Product Development

Through this phase, the Sakai Foundation will provide the infrastructure, communication and oversight necessary to ensure that operational decisions are driven by end-user priorities. One source of oversight is the Product Council, comprised of technical and function experts, that will actively oversee this process and validate that the criteria for a project to become a part of a release have been met.

#### Maintenance

Once a project has been incorporated in a Sakai release, the Sakai Foundation will support the tool through formation of a maintenance team that will provide bug fixes and feature enhancements to the released product. The formalization of a maintenance team is an improvement that will increase the community's success in effectively supporting all Sakai users.

#### End of Life

Eventually, a tool may become obsolete. The Product Council will decide if functionality should be removed from Sakai and this will generally happen when a suitable replacement is available or when a feature becomes obsolete.

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Key to this new development process is the establishment of the Sakai Product Council, a group of community leaders who will help guide projects through the development process and, ultimately, determine what is incorporated into a Sakai release. The selection process for council members is well underway, and we will be announcing the members very soon.

The Foundation looks forward to working with all Sakai institutions to implement and continuously improve the new development process.

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### SAKAI STAFF ROLES

To support the new development process and the foundation's increased focus on communications, two new positions are being created, one for a Product Manager and one for a Communications Manager. Between the two, the goal is for the Foundation to increase communication overall and to play a more proactive role in developing and executing the product roadmap.

The Sakai Product Manager will drive greater engagement, from users and contributors, and serve as the liaison between the community and the Sakai Product Council. The Product Manager will, in a very real sense, own the Sakai roadmap. The Sakai Communications Manager will be responsible for both internal and external communications for the Sakai Foundation.

In addition to myself as Executive Director, the permanent, full-time staff positions at the Sakai Foundation include:

- Product Manager: Open
- Communication Manager: Open
- Developer Support, Release Management & System Administration: Anthony Whyte
- Quality Assurance Manager: Pete Peterson
- Conference Coordinator & Administration: Mary Miles

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THE SAKAI PRODUCT

Goals and Achievements of 2008

In 2008, the Sakai Foundation focused on improving the stability and supportability of the Sakai collaborative learning environment. We instituted formal beta and release candidate stages to the release process and also have been doing formal maintenance releases (currently working on Sakai 2.5.5). While it is difficult to quantify this, we have heard repeatedly that more staff are available for new tool development or other projects, as much less time is being spent on production support of Sakai. This is clearly good news, and we hope this "extra" time will translate into new capabilities in future releases of Sakai.

Additionally, Sakai 2.6 is in the final stages of the release process. Many institutions have invested in developing Sakai 2.6, and we want to take this opportunity to thank them. While this communication cannot do justice to the breadth of enhancements and new functionality in the release, we would like to highlight a few key innovations that create powerful improvements for teaching, learning and research.

Technical Enhancements	Description/Examples
First formal Kernel release	Separates infrastructure from tools; all current components together in a single place
db2 and WebSphere	Support for using both with Sakai
Performance testing framework	Implementation of a working, proof-of-concept generic Sakai performance testing environment
Email archive performance improvements	Refactoring of email archive to support sites with large amounts of email.

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Functional Enhancements	Description/Examples
Important internationalization improvements	Support for localized tool names; localized date/time picker for Announcement, Assignment, Schedule and Resources; numerous languages supported
View as student	Allows faculty to view the site as if they were students
Session time out	Warns users when their session is about to time out
Assignments	Support for multiple submissions of an assignment; support of custom fields, with timing and role control over who can see them and when
iCal integration	External subscription support in Schedule Tool
Various Open Source Portfolio improvements	Ability to edit and delete feedback and evaluations; aggregation of Evaluations across site via My Workspace; better group awareness and filtering in Wizards tool
Tests & Quizzes	Group support; ability to edit a published assessment; improvements to statistics reporting; ability to share question pools with site members

Planning for Sakai 3

After a year of much progress in 2008, 2009 has already seen significant work and advancements, including the announcement of the Product Development Cycle outlined above. Our greatest opportunity and challenge lies in deliberately and effectively planning for the next generation of Sakai, while continuing to innovate on the Sakai 2.x platform.

Cambridge University is leading the efforts on R&D for Sakai 3, with significant contributions from Georgia Tech and the University of California Davis. In June we'll begin broad communications about the efforts to build Sakai 3 and we should see the first "incubation" projects emerge.

Over the next several months, The Sakai Foundation will work with the project teams and leaders at each institution in the Sakai community to fully staff these critical development and support needs. These efforts allow institutions across our community to gain greater benefit from resource investments and to achieve our vision to inspire enhanced teaching, learning and research throughout education.