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IBM joins educational open-source Sakai Project

The Sakai Project and IBM announced Tuesday that IBM has become a Sakai Commercial Affiliate (SCA).

IBM will contribute to the development of the Sakai code and help in the rapid commercial adoption of Sakai. IBM also will work on standards development and provide products and services based on open-source Sakai software.

The Sakai Project is an open-source project that is building and releasing online course management, collaboration and research team support software. The project involves more than 70 schools around the world. The Sakai software is currently running in production at the University of Michigan and Indiana University and is running in pilots at a number of others. The 2.0 version of the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE) will be released around the same time as the June 8-10 Sakai Conference in Baltimore.

The Sakai Commercial Affiliates are companies that work to provide support for the development of Sakai software, and support customers using it.

Joseph Hardin, Sakai Project board chairman, and a faculty member at the University of Michigan, welcomed the involvement of IBM as "another significant partner who adds to the growing value of the Sakai project to higher education." IBM has a lot of experience in working with open-source efforts like Linux and Apache. We are very pleased they see the Sakai Project as a keystone in the learning and research infrastructure for higher education, and thus deserving support." Hardin is director of the Collaborative Technologies Laboratory in the U-M's Duderstadt Center, and a Clinical Assistant Professor in the School of Information

Patrick Carey, IBM Business Consulting Services' higher education leader, said, "IBM believes the Sakai Project holds great promise for higher education. We believe in Sakai's vision and want to help build the community or 'ecosystem' as we like to call it, that will enable the long-term success of Sakai."

To provide a comprehensive support model for Sakai, IBM is working closely with its commercial open-source application software partner in higher education, The R-Smart Group. IBM and R-Smart are actively combining the talents and resources of both organizations for the success of the Sakai project as well as a

short list of other open-source projects. The R-Smart Group's Chris Coppola, vice president for community development, states "Our goal is to help drive legitimacy, widespread adoptions, and sustainability of open source applications in education—just as IBM and Red Hat have successfully driven these same results globally for Linux."

Hardin said, "The Sakai Project is 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 Stanford or Cambridge should immediately be available to faculty and students at the University of Michigan, indeed at all schools. Building on totally open source with open standards in an open community makes that possible. IBM gets that."

Carey noted, "Embracing Sakai fits with IBM's overall business model, which is focused on open architecture, open standards and open source as the keys to faster innovation in all industries. IBM wants to enable faster innovation for all our clients. The Sakai Project is an ideal vehicle for rapidly advancing innovation for our clients in higher education."

"IBM believes the open-source movement is leading to the next major paradigm shift in the software industry," Carey said. "We think it is important to view the role of open source in the more holistic form of an 'open approach' overall. Together, open source, open standards and open architecture form a powerful combination for the creation of the next generation of applications."

Brad Wheeler, Sakai Project vice chairman and Indiana University Dean of IT, said, "IBM's extensive global engagement in higher education makes them an ideal Sakai Affiliate as demand for open source software grows globally. IBM's global reach further enhances an already strong group of commercial affiliates."

The Sakai Project welcomes inquiries from potential commercial partners who are interested in moving the Sakai software and community forward, and supporting services based on Sakai. For more information, contact Brad Wheeler at BWheeler@indiana.edu.

The Sakai Project conference is being held in Baltimore, Md., June 8-10 as part of Community Source Week. The Sakai Project, the Open Source Portfolio Initiative, and uPortal by JA-SIG invite you to attend their respective conferences that are consecutively scheduled as part of Community Source Week. Join other academic technologists, administrators, developers, faculty, and companies as we gather in Baltimore to press ahead with open source projects for higher education. See CommunitySourceWeek.org

About Sakai

The Sakai Project, a landmark venture to create open-source course management, collaboration and online research support tools for the higher education community, involves more than 70 universities, colleges and institutions of learning around the world. The project, begun through with a collaboration involving the University of Michigan , Indiana University , the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University , the Open Knowledge Initiative and the uPortal Project, and funded by the Mellon and Hewlett Foundations, has released the 1.0 and 1.5 versions of its software and plans to release its innovative 2.0 version this summer.

About IBM

IBM, the world's largest consulting, services and information technology company, helps improve education throughout the world. For more than 80 years, IBM people and solutions have been helping schools and institutions of higher education innovate for greater achievement, productivity and efficiency. IBM draws on its world-class portfolio of services, software and hardware solutions to help clients realize the full potential of their technology investments. For information about IBM's solutions and experience in education, please visit: www.ibm.com/industries/education. For more on IBM's support of the open source movement, please visit: http://www-130.ibm.com/developerworks/opensource. For information on partnering with IBM, please visit: www.ibm.com/partnerworld.

About R-Smart

The R-Smart Group is a commercial open source application software company serving the higher education market. R-Smart packages, certifies, deploys, and supports a suite of enterprise financial and collaborative learning applications for colleges and universities. This suite of software is developed in cooperation with a well-established community of educational institutions under an open source license. This collaborative approach allows R-Smart to offer colleges and universities open source applications that break their dependence on traditional proprietary software vendors. See http://www.rsmart.com

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