Finding IT Expertise on Campus—Opportunities Abound!

According to the 2003 Campus Computing Project (www.campuscomputing.net), a National Survey of Information Technology in US Higher Education, budget cuts continue to grow having huge impacts on campus IT activities and investments. Two-fifths (41.3 percent) of the survey participants report budget cuts affecting academic computing this year, up from 32.6 percent in 2002 and just 18 percent in 2001. Similarly, just over two-fifths of the institutions report reduced funding for administrative computing, compared to almost one-third (31.0 percent) in 2002, and one-fifth (18.3 percent) in 2001. In addition, one-third (32.4 percent) of the 2003 survey participants report mid-year budgets cuts this past year, up from 24.9 percent in 2002 and 8.0 percent in 2001.

Unfortunately, despite reduced budgets, the 2003 Campus Computing Project and other indicators clearly show that interest and demand for technology-based initiatives such as wireless connectivity, web-based portals, course management systems, e-commerce and service solutions on university campuses continue to flourish. A necessary component in supporting this growth is an increase in IT personnel to implement, manage and support these technology initiatives.

In budget friendly years, many universities were able to search and advertise for these needed positions regionally or even nationally, offering attractive competitive salaries and benefit packages. With decreasing budgets and no reprieve in the foreseeable future, universities are struggling with how to acquire IT expertise and personnel inexpensively. One possible solution is to tap the often overlooked pool of IT expertise that exists on campuses. Universities can reap great benefits in leveraging these talents from within the system for little or often no money. Individuals on campus that may have the necessary expertise may include faculty, staff and students working or studying in a variety of contexts.

This presentation will discuss and describe a number of these opportunities highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, associated costs and benefits to both parties, and how to create such opportunities if none exist. These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- senior capstone projects,
- course work,
- internships,
- work study programs,
- assistantships,
- partnerships,
- mentoring programs, and
- other opportunities.