LSU computer agencies create partnership
'Fresh start' to help with supercomputing gateway

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The LSU Center for Computation & Technology and LSU Information Technology Services have partnered to eliminate staff duplications to save money and are launching a Web site that will give researchers a central gateway to supercomputing resources at LSU.

"We're making a fresh start and doing things differently in HPC (high-performance computing)," LSU Chief Information Officer Brian Voss said in a statement. "Information technology-enabled research is key to both our organizations' strategic efforts to advance the university's research mission, which will lead to a better environment for learning, research and discovery," he said.

The partnership sheds the traditional model that most universities use today to deliver high-performance computing.

Instead of having separate administrative and research computing groups, a collaborative approach and combining staff allow the organizations to combine investment strategies and leverage their purchasing power toward the acquisition of future machines and expertise at LSU.

Both CCT and ITS had hiring plans for system administration and user support staff. As part of the partnership, the two organizations combined their personnel plans and eliminated the need for possible duplicate positions.

The university will save roughly $1 million per year in personnel costs, the groups said in a statement.

The groups also are establishing a Web site at www.hpc.lsu.edu, with access for researchers to large computing machines, including Pelican, Santaka, SuperMike, Nemeaux and SuperHelix.

The new HPC organization and Web site will streamline access for LSU faculty to more than 13 million hours of computing time per year and a nearly nine Teraflops (a Teraflop is equal to 1 trillion floating-point operations per second) capacity on six computational systems available in the HPC group.

CCT and ITS will focus on different roles that high-performance computing will play at the university.

ITS will concentrate on management of LSU's HPC infrastructure, which includes computers, storage and high-speed networking, and will provide support and training to users.

CCT will work with faculty to develop new, innovative ways to use computing to advance individual disciplines as well as interdisciplinary projects.

"By focusing on what we think each of our organizations is meant to do and by joining forces, we've got a very good foundation to build the kinds of computing services and support that people need," CCT Director Edward Seidel said. "Our vision is to create a merged environment where we each focus on customer service, but the services from each organization will be different."

Already, the partnership staff is playing a leading role in deploying the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative, or LONI.

The computer network will link LSU and seven other campuses in the state: Louisiana Tech University, LSU-Shreveport Medical Center, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Southern University, the University of New Orleans, LSU Medical Center and Tulane University.

In turn, they will have access to the computing power of the National LamdaRail network, giving researchers in Louisiana an opportunity to bid on large research project grants from the likes of NASA, the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health and opening the door to hundreds of millions of dollars in funding.