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Schools seeking high-speed networks

Mizzou one of 29 working to help local communities.

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Written by Alan Scher Zagier, The Associated Press

COLUMBIA -- The University of Missouri announced Wednesday that is joining an effort by some of the country's top colleges to build "ultra" high-speed data networks in their local communities.

The project is known as Gig.U: The University Community Next Generation Innovation Project. The 29 participating schools include Arizona State, Duke, Florida, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Florida and Wake Forest. The Aspen Institute, a Colorado-based nonprofit, initiated the effort.

The schools and their local partners will solicit proposals from telecommunications companies in their area. They hope to quickly build high-speed broadband networks in communities with low unemployment and heavy demand for such services.

"These networks drive economic growth," said University of Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton. "It will turn the entire city into a laboratory for high-bandwidth technology."

Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid said the city was eager to participate after losing out to Kansas City, Kan., earlier this year as the first place to receive search engine giant Google's new super-fast broadband network, which will provide Internet connections of one gigabit per second.

"The train infrastructure of the 1800s is now the bandwidth of our time," he said. "It's not an (information) pipeline anymore. It's a river. It's a torrent."

The city, state and the university will share the initial \$15,000 project costs but expect private investment to drive most of the effort.

"We are talking scores of millions of dollars," McDavid acknowledged.

Project organizers hope the effort in some of the country's most prominent college towns -- from Bloomington, Ind. to State College, Pa. -- will drive domestic production of the next generation of Internet applications in an increasingly crowded global marketplace.



City, MU join group seeking ultrafast Internet

By Jacob Barker

It has been four months since Columbia learned Google would build its high-speed broadband network elsewhere. But the city and the University of Missouri haven't given up on the idea of securing a network boasting speeds scores of times faster than what is available today.

City and university officials announced this morning that they are joining a consortium of research universities and their communities focused on securing ultra high-speed broadband networks.

Known as Gig.U, the group of communities hopes that by collaborating they will be able to entice providers to invest in ultrafast networks in their markets.

The funding for the first phase of the project, which includes developing a request for information that will be sent to internet service providers, is approximately \$15,000 and will be split among the city (\$6,000), MU (\$7,500) and MORENet (\$1,500), according to a university news release.

Project leaders hope that the initial investment will lead to grants for research and community infrastructure.

A business model to secure high-speed broadband still needs to be developed, Mayor Bob McDavid said, and he sees the consortium working together to build a model acceptable to Internet providers. "I'm actually convinced the demand's going to be there," McDavid said.

Columbia officials believe a network with download speeds as fast as 1 gigabit per second would benefit not only university researchers but the community's cluster of high-tech companies such as Carfax, IBM and ABC Labs as well as smaller startups.

The Washington, D.C.-based consortium, which bills itself as the University Community Next Generation Innovation Project, said in an open letter that networks in college towns aren't adequate for future research needs and there is no plan to upgrade network speeds quickly enough to retain U.S. research universities' global dominance.

In the next 90 days, the group plans to send out a request for information to potential service providers that would be interested in building the new networks.

For providers wary of making a huge investment in a smaller market, the consortium hopes that by combining a number of cities and their universities, potential economies of scale could make the investment more attractive. Scale is the whole point behind the effort, said John Gillispie, the executive director of MOREnet. Gillispie heard a presentation on the effort back in April and passed along the idea to the city and the university to get involved.

“I don’t think we know what the results are going to look like yet,” Gillispie said. “This is very much a process where we’re trying to engage private-sector corporations to understand what they need to make these kinds of investments.”

Keith Politte of the Reynolds Journalism Institute at MU said many of the members who joined the effort are college towns that also attempted to woo Google.

“If you look globally, the U.S. needs to step up because there are many other countries around the world where this kind of high-speed broadband is just assumed,” he said.

There has been some interest from companies in the idea, McDavid said, but it’s still early in the process. “The private parties out there are exploring their capital needs,” he said.

Although no one is quite sure what will happen with the new speeds or how they’ll be used, most involved have faith that the applications will become evident as the service becomes available.

“No one’s really quite sure what happens when you build them,” Gillispie said. “If the past is any indication of what the future is, we’ll see lots of interesting things develop.”

Institutions that are charter members of Gig.U along with MU include: Duke University, University of Michigan, Penn State University, Case Western Reserve University, University of Chicago, University of Virginia, University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, University of Virginia, Arizona State University, Indiana University, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, University of Alaska, University of Maryland, University of Florida, University of Hawaii and West Virginia University.

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MU joins Gig.U, tries to bring to Columbia one-gigabit Internet

By [Abby Eisenberg](#)

July 27, 2011 | 6:32 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – MU has joined 28 other research universities in an effort to bring ultra high-speed Internet to their campuses and surrounding communities.

“Gig.U: The University Community Next Generation Innovation Project” would work to facilitate the creation of a one-gigabit network connection in participating areas. In MU's case, that would mean much faster Internet for Columbia businesses and homes.

Gig.U is a nationwide effort to bring research institutions and city leaders together in the interest of innovation and economic growth. The intention behind it is for the U.S. to remain competitive globally in the development of high-speed technologies and applications.

Other campuses involved in the initiative include Indiana University, Duke University, the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan.

University and city leaders announced their involvement with Gig.U on Wednesday. MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said he sees this project as an opportunity for MU faculty and staff, as well as the Columbia business community.

As a national research institution, Deaton said, MU researchers and scholars would benefit from the large amount of data sharing between the campus and the larger community that would be possible through the creation of the network.

Deaton also said the project would help campus outreach through MU Extension, which houses MU Direct, a continuing and distance education arm of the university.

First phase: seeking information

The first phase of the project includes asking current Columbia-area Internet providers what would be needed to carry one-gigabit of bandwidth and how the project could be carried out if it proceeds.

One-gigabit connectivity is far beyond network speeds currently offered in the area. For example, the highest speed offered by Columbia Internet provider Mediacom is a 50-megabit network connection, 1/20 of the speed that would be offered through Gig.U.

MU contributed \$7,500, the city \$6,000 and MOREnet — a unit that operates within MU to provide Internet support and services across the state's public sector — \$1,500 toward the information-seeking phase.

“Our starting position is that it is not about risk capital coming from the university or community,” Gig.U executive director Blair Levin said. Rather, funding for the upgrade of the networks would be done on the private side, he said.

Throughout the next few weeks, Gig.U officials will talk with a group of potential buyers and providers to see if this would be possible, Levin said.

Levin is based at the Aspen Institute, the mission of which is “to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues.”

After feedback is received, the interest level of the carriers as well as Columbia businesses will be gauged, and the coalition will move forward accordingly.

Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid said this would be a potentially disruptive technology for current Internet providers, but he stressed he wants this to be a collaborative effort.

“We want to work with them,” McDavid said. “We want them to be on board. This will be a game-changer for a lot of businesses and industries.”

Because the information request is still in its early phases, it is still undetermined which companies will receive the request, said Toni Messina, communications director for the city of Columbia.

Building on Google Fiber bid

In March 2010, former Mayor Darwin Hindman submitted an application on behalf of the city to be considered for one of Google's ultra high-speed test networks, part of the Google Fiber Initiative.

This project has a goal of building and testing a small number of trial networks throughout the nation, with the ultimate goal of universal, competitively priced ultra high-speed Internet connections, according to the Google Fiber website.

Work done by the city to apply to be a part of the Google Fiber Initiative helped put a basic infrastructure in place throughout Columbia to prepare for the type of broadband that Gig. U would bring to the area, McDavid said.

“The biggest disappointment I’ve had in serving Columbia is how close we came to landing that deal,” McDavid said. Kansas City, Kan., and Kansas City, Mo., were instead chosen to participate in the project.

Despite that disappointment, those efforts helped create a team dedicated to the goal of bringing ultra high-speed Internet to the area, McDavid said.

“This is a collaboration that formed in that initiative and will survive and thrive in the future,” he said.

Missouri has another major effort in place: trying to bring high-speed broadband to more of its citizens.

MoBroadbandNow is an initiative to build a partnership between the public and private sectors to extend broadband access across the state from its current 79 percent to 90 percent by the end of 2014, according to the initiative’s website.

Although the initiative and the Gig.U partnerships are not currently connected, Gary Allen, vice president for information technology for the University of Missouri System and chief information officer for MU, said the two organizations are clearly compatible, and he foresees a potential for their collaboration in the future.

McDavid urged the public to see the importance of Columbia leadership in the project.

“Hop aboard the Gig.U train,” McDavid said. “We won’t be satisfied in the caboose. We are going to drive the train.”

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Dogs, veterans help each other (AUDIO)

by Allison Blood on July 27, 2011

A researcher with the University of Missouri Research Center for Human Animal Interaction says shelter dogs and veterans have a lot to offer each other. Rebecca Johnson started a program pairing dogs and veterans for a three-phase project aimed at helping both be ready to return to society.

She says the program has three steps. The first is teaching the dogs basic skills like sitting and staying. The second is for veterans to follow-up with the dogs once they've been adopted by calling the dogs' new homes.

The third phase is identifying of any dogs would be good companions for veterans with severe post traumatic stress disorder. She says the dogs offer the veterans a chance to get some unconditional love and understanding after coming back from war. She says post traumatic stress disorder is common among veterans, and working with the dogs can help ease the transition.

PTSD service dogs are placed with veterans who have such severe post traumatic stress disorder that they need a companion to help them through everyday life.

Johnson says there have been 12 veterans in the program, but over 100 dogs. She says sometimes the dogs and veterans get along so well, the veterans adopt the dogs before the training is even over. She says they would like more veterans in the program, so they're actively recruiting. It's a two-hour a week commitment. The program started earlier this year, and is going to start in Springfield at the Humane Society there.



Big 12 is back in the business of bickering

The honeymoon for the remarried Big 12 lasted about 13 months before the popular topic of blowing up the league was revisited.

The issue this time is the Longhorn Network, although it is just a new symptom of an old disease.

Conference Commissioner Dan Beebe is beholden to his Burnt Orange overlords — as were his predecessors, as will be his successors if the league lasts that long. Whatever keeps Texas happy keeps the Big 12 intact. But indulging every Texas power grab might drive disgruntled Big 12 schools into the arms of more equitable conferences, as we've already seen with Nebraska and the Big Ten.

So here we go again, in a dispute that never needed to be. If the league members had the foresight to pool all their television rights, there would be no Longhorn Network, just as there is no Buckeye Network or Gator Network. There might have been a Big 12 Network, though, which would have made every league member richer and better. While the Big 12 schools figure out ways to make a few more bucks than their partners, they lose ground to the collective bargaining power of the more unified Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC.

I'm not sure why the Longhorn Network is just now sparking furious debate. It is overdue. In January, ESPN announced it would be paying Texas \$15 million per year for the honor of broadcasting a 24/7 infomercial. From the get-go, it was suggested that the network would televise high school football in addition to Longhorn games, coaches shows, commencement speeches and whatnot.

The angst escalated a few weeks ago after a radio interview in which Dave Brown, the Longhorn Network's vice president for programming and acquisitions, started name-dropping specific unsigned Texas football recruits whose games would be televised. If Brown were an employee of the school, his public comments would have been an NCAA violation, but he is an employee of ESPN. Do you think recruits make that distinction, separating the two entities, or do they just hear a homer from the Longhorn Network singing their praises?

Beebe said the network's plan to broadcast high school games is on hold until the NCAA can sort out the matter. It is uncharted territory, but surely no one could dispute that broadcasting high school games is an unfair recruiting advantage. Actually, at Big 12 media days, Texas Coach Mack Brown preposterously claimed that all schools recruiting in the state of Texas would benefit from games being shown on something called the Longhorn Network.

Missouri's Gary Pinkel and Oklahoma's Bob Stoops responded that Mack shouldn't unleash his trickle-down economics and tell them it's raining.

"What are we doing here?" Pinkel asked rhetorically, saying that allowing high school games on the Longhorn Network showed "a lack of common sense."

"The lifeblood of every program is recruiting," Stoops added. "And so we either all recruit by the same rules or we don't."

Congratulations to Pinkel and Stoops for speaking their minds while other coaches plastered on smiles and performed the I-am-but-a-simple-caveman routine when asked for their opinion about the network.

Heads are about to explode over this matter at Texas A&M, where coaches get fired for losing to the Longhorns. The rumor mill has reheated with suggestions Texas A&M could leave for the SEC. Tim Brando of CBS Sports even tweeted that Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Missouri have spoken to the SEC about defecting.

I doubt that. One MU official said Friday there was "zero" truth to that report, Texas A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne said he doesn't want to leave the Big 12 and Oklahoma Athletic Director Joe Castiglione is a staunch Big 12 guy. At the SEC media days last week, Commissioner Mike Slive said his conference wasn't shopping but boasted that it could go from 12 to 16 teams in 15 minutes.

From Missouri's perspective, I don't think the SEC would be the right move anyway. The Big Ten would be a good fit academically, culturally and competitively, and the SEC wouldn't be. The only compelling reason to go would be the imminent demise of the Big 12.

Which brings me to my final point. If the Big 12 is going to survive, its schools are going to have to learn to compromise. Texas needs to tone down the Gordon Gecko act, and the others can't treat every controversy as an excuse to dismantle the conference.

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MU graduate promoted to brigadier general

An Army officer who earned a doctorate from the University of Missouri was promoted to brigadier general during a White House ceremony this month.

Julie Bentz of the Oregon Army National Guard is to be assigned as director of strategic capabilities policy for the National Security Council in Washington, D.C.

Bentz received an ROTC commission from Oregon State University in June 1986 and was assigned to active duty as a nuclear medical science officer in Landstuhl, Germany. She has more than 24 years of service and has held multiple roles from fieldwork to White House adviser, according to a news release from the Oregon Military Department.

In addition to a bachelor's degree in radiological health from Oregon State University, Bentz holds a master's degree and a doctorate in nuclear engineering from the University of Missouri. She also is a graduate of the National War College with a master's degree in national security strategy.

Bentz is the first woman from the Oregon National Guard to be selected for brigadier general, according to the release.