

September 10, 2008

## Louisiana Tech joins consortium for distance learning

*Staff report*

Louisiana Tech is one of seven charter members of the New Century Learning Consortium, a group whose mission is to assist universities in implementing high quality, large-scale online and blended learning programs.

Representatives from six universities from across the nation attended the first meeting of the New Century Learning Consortium at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Founded by Ray Schroeder, director of UIS' Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning, and Burks Oakley, founding director of the University of Illinois Online, the consortium is funded with a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

"This is an exciting initiative that brings together state universities spread across the U.S.," Schroeder said. "Our organizational meeting enabled us to formalize our relationships and begin collaborations in the development of online and blended learning initiatives that will span the country."

Schroeder said the recent rise in gas prices has significantly increased student demand for the delivery of classes in online and blended learning formats.

Consortium activities include developing a clearinghouse of online classes where there is excess capacity; shared IT expertise to support building infrastructure capacity; and peer support at the upper administration, dean and faculty member levels.

Institutions taking part in the consortium are dedicated to developing vigorous online and blended learning initiatives to expand and stabilize student enrollments. They are Tech, California State University East Bay, Hayward, Calif.; Southern Oregon University, Ashland, Ore.; Chicago State University; Oakland University, Rochester Hills, Mich.; and University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine.

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