



Press Release

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Southern Governors Endorse SURA IT Initiative

Richmond, VA – The Southern Governors’ Association (SGA) today endorsed a major information technology initiative of the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) – efforts to enable high performance grid computing, thereby enhancing science capacity and improving economic competitiveness in the Southern United States.

At their annual meeting held in Richmond, the governors unanimously passed a resolution calling on the two organizations to continue to “work together to ensure the compatibility of the high-performance computing and networking technologies of the higher education community and state governments.” Ultimately, this partnership expects to “improve the science capacity and economic competitiveness of the region,” according to the resolution.

Last year, SURA announced the SURA–AT&T GridFiber Collaboration Agreement, a ten-year agreement designed to speed the creation of regional and national grid services to support the research and education (R&E) community. Under the agreement, AT&T has made available at no cost to the nation’s R&E community, 8,000 miles of dark fiber network and a substantial inventory of optical networking equipment. In collaboration with the National LambdaRail (NLR), and other regional networking organizations, SURA has been working to deploy optical technologies to enhance the research capabilities of the nation.

At the meeting, Ed Seidel, Director of the Center for Computation and Technology at Louisiana State University, reported on the progress of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative (LONI) – a beneficiary of fiber provided through SURA – and illustrated the progress being experienced in the region. Gov. Mark R. Warner of Virginia, SGA Chairman, said, “This has been a real ‘win’ for the region with real tangible results.”

“Of immediate interest to SURA,” according to Jerry Draayer, SURA President and CEO, “is the support of high performance computing and networking needs of the nuclear physics program at the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility that we manage and operate for the Department of Energy. We also are focused on the SURA Coastal Ocean Observing and Prediction (SCOOP) program, and on anticipated collaborative bio-informatics and telehealth, medical research and high performance computing grid applications. SURA is committed to making advanced networking capabilities available to the broadest set of research and education institutions, especially ensuring equal access to minority serving institutions,” noted Draayer.

The SGA resolution, sponsored by Gov. Warner and offered by Gov. Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana, notes that “SURA has engaged in the development of creative public-private partnerships with state governments, its higher education community and well-positioned corporate partners to gain access to and potential ownership of high-performance networking assets, thereby creating a high performance

network grid.” Earlier this month, Gov. Blanco announced that the state of Louisiana would commit \$40 million over the next ten years to support and expand utilization of this new research tool.

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The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) is a consortium of over 60 leading research institutions in the southern United States and the District of Columbia established in 1980 as a non-stock, nonprofit corporation. SURA serves as an entity through which colleges, universities, and other organizations may cooperate with one another, government and industry in acquiring, developing, and using laboratories and other research facilities and in furthering knowledge and the application of that knowledge in the physical, biological, and other natural sciences and engineering. For more information, visit www.sura.org.