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AT&T, Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) Announce Agreement to Advance Nation's Grid Networking Infrastructure

AT&T will make 8,000 miles of dark fiber available to the research and education community

Washington, D.C., December 16, 2003 — AT&T and the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) announced today a collaboration agreement that will allow the nation's research and education community to use AT&T's newest national network infrastructure for experimental work on the next generation of networking technology and applications, called Grid networking.

The collaboration agreement is designed to speed the creation of regional and national Grid services to support the nation's research and education (R&E) community. AT&T will make available, at no cost to SURA and the nation's R&E community, 8,000 miles of dark fiber network as well as a substantial inventory of optical networking equipment. These assets will be used to develop experimental network services to support advanced research that would not be possible using a commercial network. AT&T also will lease to SURA and its partners additional network facilities and capacity as needed. The company will make its network assets available through USAWaves, an R&E networking initiative created by SURA.

Grid networking enables computing facilities, scientific data repositories and applications to be shared, allowing researchers to more rapidly solve complex problems, conduct computer-intensive research or analyze vast amounts of data. For example, advances in the areas of database mining, particle detectors, telescope observatories, electron microscopes and technical testing devices are all being networked, allowing data to be shared, managed and accessed. The promise of high-end grid computing will become possible when high-capacity optical networks are available to the R&E community.

“As a pioneer in next-generation networking technologies, AT&T is looking forward to working with the nation's R&E community to establish a new core network infrastructure for emerging computing grids,” said Hossein Eslambolchi, President of AT&T Labs and AT&T's Chief Technology Officer. “We want to help scientists in the U.S. to continue to lead the world in the field of networking. Additionally, we want to extend the availability of AT&T's leading edge network resources beyond top-tier research institutions to include universities that until now have not enjoyed access to high-speed facilities. Finally, we plan to leverage what we jointly learn

and build with the R&E community to advance AT&T's leadership in the commercial grid connectivity business.”

“We are extremely pleased that AT&T is taking this innovative approach in collaboration with SURA,” said Louisiana State University Chancellor and Chair of SURA's Council of Presidents, Mark Emmert. “This agreement is a very important step in helping to realize a vision for a new national optical networking capability for research and education – a vision that has been clearly articulated by SURA's most prominent institutional leaders.”

This collaboration with AT&T will help advance a number of regional initiatives that require advanced network infrastructure and services, including several R&E optical networking initiatives currently underway in Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma. Also within the SURA region, the Southern Governors' Association (SGA) is pursuing a number of initiatives that can benefit from this agreement. These include the Southern States high performance network Grid, the Southern eCorridors Project for economic development and a Southern Governors' Telehealth initiative. SURA has been working with the SGA to define and develop strategies for implementing these initiatives.

A group of U.S. research institutions and private sector technology companies have launched the National LambdaRail (NLR) project to provide a national infrastructure for research and experimentation in networking technologies and applications. Five of the NLR access nodes are expected to be established in the SURA region. Through USAWaves, SURA expects to contribute to extending the reach of NLR, and as a result, enhance scientific research capacity and improve the competitive position of the South in the national and global economies.

Today's announcement is the result of a SURA-sponsored study by Geographic Network Affiliates, Inc. (GEO) and the Internet Educational Equal Access Foundation (IEEAF) to identify potential corporate partners in developing a new set of network services to support and strengthen education and scientific research in the South. “While there were many people involved in this effort, GEO Chairman Ed Fantegrossi and IEEAF Board Chair Don Riley of the University of Maryland have provided SURA with valuable insight and assistance throughout the development of this agreement with AT&T,” notes SURA President Jerry P. Draayer. “Their integrity, vision and steadfast commitment to closing the digital divide have been key to the success of this effort. With this agreement in place, SURA is ready to take an active role in enabling grid computing capabilities in the SURA region and the nation.”

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About AT&T

For more than 125 years, AT&T (NYSE "T") has been known for unparalleled quality and reliability in communications. Backed by the research and development capabilities of AT&T Labs, the company is a global leader in local, long distance, Internet and transaction-based voice and data services. For more information, visit www.att.com.

About SURA

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.