



Alberta Research Grid gets federal boost

CALGARY (8 February 2002) – Over \$20 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) has been awarded to Alberta information technology projects, endorsing efforts in Alberta to build a critical mass of people and projects known as the Alberta Research Grid, according to Dr Brian Unger, president of the Alberta Informatics Circle of Research Excellence (iCORE) and one of the province's leading advocates of research excellence.

Dr Unger is one of five scientists spearheading a project called WestGrid, which received \$12 million in the latest round of CFI funding announced last week. WestGrid will contribute to a more comprehensive set of interconnected resources taking shape as the Alberta Research Grid.

WestGrid alone is a collaborative project to develop a Western Canada Research Grid of computational resources involving the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, The Banff Centre, and four research institutions in British Columbia: University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, TRIUMF, and the New Media Innovation Centre.

"This is superb news and a strong signal that Alberta is taking the right steps in research infrastructure for the information economy," says Dr Jonathan Schaeffer, principal applicant for the WestGrid project and iCORE Chair of the Artificial Intelligence High Performance Laboratory at the University of Alberta.

Other Alberta awards in the information and communications technology field include:

- \$3 million for a nanotechnology facility in Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Alberta, led by iCORE Professor Dr Michael Brett
- \$1.7 million for Internet network traffic analyzers and experimental testing of Internet protocols and applications, led by iCORE Professor Dr Carey Williamson.
- \$3.7 million for TR Labs' "Network of the Future" to extend research on wireless communication, optical network infrastructure, and multimedia technologies

"It is thrilling to see research areas of great strength emerging in Alberta. Look at the number of iCORE researchers also rewarded by the international experts adjudicating the CFI federal program," Dr Unger says. "As we coordinate and communicate our goals for Alberta's technological achievements through the Alberta Research Grid, the entire playing field is elevated."

The grid concept in computing is analagous to a power utility grid, except that power lines are networks, and the power stations are computers. Netera Alliance is the organization in Alberta coordinating the development of the Alberta Research Grid. Receipt of CFI funding is contingent upon matching funds from the Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA). ASRA's decision is expected in late February.

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