IBM and University of Arkansas Team Up to Help Students Prepare for Tomorrow’s Technology Workplace

Free access to software, curriculum and educational benefits for students

May 23, 2005 – IBM announced today it would provide free information technology (IT) resources to help build the skills required by the fast-changing technology workplace for students of the Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas.

IBM and the University of Arkansas are working with a number of companies in industries such as retail, electronics and transportation to customize these skills and prepare Walton College students for specific types of information technology jobs. Through IBM’s Academic Initiative the Walton College will have the assistance and resources to structure the necessary technology course curriculum and employable skills training. More than 100 IBM software technologies, 80 existing course materials representing 80 courses, use of IBM hardware and technology consultants will be available through the Academic Initiative. This customized training development, valued at $7 million this fiscal year with a potential for renewal for four years valued at $1.2 million per year, will ensure Walton College graduates are well-educated in open standards-based technologies and open source software utilized by large employers.

“Thousands of Walton College students will be impacted by IBM’s Academic Initiative. This collaboration with IBM is a landmark event that propels the Walton College into ‘world-class’ caliber in the area of industrial-strength enterprise information technology,” said Fred Davis, professor, chair of the Walton College information systems department and David D. Glass Chair in Information Systems. “The partnership also reaffirms IBM’s commitment to the college and the firms who sponsor the Walton College Enterprise Systems Programs, including Datatronics, Dillard’s Inc., J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc., Tyson Foods, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and others.”

“We are very excited about the IBM Academic Initiative which includes a wide range of software and a zSeries mainframe with an Integrated Facility for Linux,” said David Douglas, Walton College professor of Information Systems. “The most important aspect of the IBM Academic Initiative is the richness of the software development tools including the Rational Suite of products and Open Source. These development tools coupled with state of the art hardware will provide exceptional educational opportunities for our students that would not otherwise be possible.”

Among the key technologies taught, Walton College students will learn database management on IBM’s DB2 database software with real transactional data and how to work with open source software Linux, the fastest-growing operating system. In
addition, Walton College students will learn mainframe-computing skills on an IBM zSeries eServer.

With 1.5 million new IT jobs projected by the US Labor Department by 2007 and a steep decline in graduates with computing degrees over the past decade, a widening IT labor skills shortage is eminent.

"The numbers don't lie. There will be more technology jobs than qualified applicants unless we do something about it," said Buell Duncan, General Manager of ISV & Developer Relations and the IBM Academic Initiative. "The business sector needs to step up and be part of the solution. In that light, we're very proud to work with a number of companies and the University of Arkansas to provide their graduates a better chance to win those highly skilled information technology jobs. That's what the Academic Initiative is all about: providing in-demand skills for an On Demand world."

As part of the Academic Initiative, IBM is working with select schools to achieve the following three key objectives:

- Training an IT workforce to fill the new kinds of jobs that are emerging at IBM and across the industry;
- Providing the right skills to the next generation of IT workers to ensure they are qualified for the jobs of tomorrow; and
- Ensuring that universities have the most current and relevant curricula that map to the kinds of jobs that are expected, so schools can be attractive for enrollment, funding and growth.

Davis added: "With such leading-edge technologies and systems design practices, the college and the University of Arkansas can deliver value by helping sponsor organizations identify and accelerate the deployment of those technologies that most effectively address their specific business needs."

The Sam M. Walton College of Business, founded in 1926 at the University of Arkansas, is the state’s premier business school. The college vision is to connect scholarship with practice and people with organizations. In the U.S. News & World Report American’s Best Colleges 2005, the Walton College ranked in a tie for 25th place among U.S. public undergraduate business schools. (waltoncollege.uark.edu)

The IBM Academic Initiative is an innovative program offering a wide range of technology education benefits from free to fee that can scale to meet the goals of most colleges and universities. IBM will work with schools -- that support open standards and seek to use open source and IBM technologies for teaching purposes -- both directly and virtually via the Web.

For more information on the IBM Academic Initiative, visit www.ibm.com/university.