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June 23, 2005

Section: BUSINESS

Page: D1

E-learning group is tech council's 7th industry cluster

David Wichner, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

TECH FILE

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Just in time for summer, a compendium of technology news and notes from Southern Arizona:

Counting clusters

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The recent merger of Southern Arizona's manufacturing and information-technology clusters isn't the only recent change to the area's high-tech cluster lineup.

The Greater Arizona eLearning Association recently became the seventh industry cluster supported by the Southern Arizona Tech Council.

The association is made up of providers and consumers of electronic educational technologies and services, including digital media such as the Internet, CDs, cable TV and streaming media, for education, workplace training and communication.

A spinoff of the former Arizona Learning Technology Partnership, the association has no dues-paying membership but has been holding semiregular seminars that attract 50 to 60 attendees, Tucson-based coordinator Steve Peters said.

Tucson members of the association's 21-member board are Margaret Martinez, CEO of The Training Place, and Pithamber Polsani, president of N-Learning Inc.

The association is working on a new Web site at www.gazel.org as part of a larger overhaul of cluster sites, Peters said. The next meeting, tentatively planned for mid-August, will focus on how video-game technology can be adapted to e-learning applications, he added.

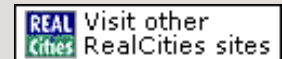
Besides the Greater Arizona eLearning Association, the other six high-tech clusters are the recently merged Aerospace, Manufacturing & Information Technology Cluster; the Bio Industry Organization of Southern Arizona; the Environmental Technology Industry Cluster; the Arizona Optics Industry Association; the Plastics and Advanced Composite Materials Cluster; and the Arizona Nanotechnology Cluster.

European tech mission



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Economic-development groups in Tucson, the United Kingdom and Germany will "cross-promote" their regions as the result of a recent trade mission local officials made to Europe.

Mayor Bob Walkup led a group, which included University of Arizona Science and Technology Park CEO Bruce Wright and optics industry leader Bob **Breault** of **Breault** Research Organization, on a tour with stops in Manchester, England, northern Wales and Berlin.

Among the agreements reached were commitments to set up Web-based forums and video links to promote business-development; to promote each others' regions at trade shows; and to set aside temporary office space at tech parks in each region for companies looking to work internationally, said John Grabo, director of marketing and international programs at the UA Science and Technology Park and another trade-mission traveler.

Tucson officials also picked up two good leads on Manchester-area companies looking to open offices in the United States, including one optics company and a pharmacology firm, Grabo said.

Trade delegations from Manchester and Berlin are to visit Tucson again early next year, he added.

TGen gets federal grant

The Translational Genomics Research Institute has won a \$7.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to continue a project designed to uncover the genetic causes of neurological and mental-health disorders using sophisticated genetic-scanning technologies.

This award is part of a larger, \$25 million grant that the Phoenix-based institute, known as TGen, will share with three other research centers.

The project is aimed at increasing understanding of the brain's normal workings, as well as disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis, said Dr. Dietrich Stephan, director of TGen's neurogenomics division.

Techies on the move

Todd Bankofier, president and CEO of the Phoenix-based Arizona Technology Council, will step down Aug. 26 to become vice president and Arizona general manager of Ensynch Inc., a Tempe-based information technology consulting company.

Marcus Needham has left The River Internet Access Co. to become president and CEO of Tucson-based Mountain Dynamics Inc., a software development startup that will develop and market software and services for recreational GPS applications. Needham co-founded The River in 1995 and was president and CEO. The River was acquired last year by MobilePro Corp. of Bethesda, Md.

* Send news about technology-based businesses to David Wichner, Business, Arizona Daily Star, P.O. Box 26807, Tucson, AZ 85726; fax to 573-4144; or e-mail to dwichner@azstarnet.com.

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