

## Tapio Reponen<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.BledConference.org/eUniversityForum>

# eUniversity Forum - Integration Challenges for Rectors & Deans: Cross-border Cooperation in eRegion & Ambassadors Involvement

## eUniversity Forum Description

Information technology is having a dramatic impact on both the delivery of higher education and the operations of universities. During this Forum at the 19th Bled eConference, university rectors, deans and professors will share their perspectives related to the academic impact that Information and Communication Technology can have on the development of the University sector in Europe.

The Universities are facing global competition on the markets of both education and research. The competitiveness of European Universities should be strengthened to reach the leading edge in some fields of research and to offer more quality in all sectors of higher education. To meet these goals we have to deal with the challenge of combining collaboration and healthy competition between Universities. Information technology and eLearning play an important role in the development of both efficiency and effectiveness of the academic world. The following introduces some

examples of the challenges that will be addressed by the panel.

## 1 Management challenges

We often hear that University research is a key issue in our future economic development. Rectors, deans and professors are confronted, however, in everyday life with multiple major problems, like University financing, structural development in Universities, cooperation with other Universities, possible mergers with other Universities, balance between theoretical and empirical research, knowledge vs. cultural values, creativity and innovation processes, promoting entrepreneurship in education and University management, etc.

Mobility of people, sharing knowledge and creating platforms for interorganizational information processes are necessary. Crossing organizational boundaries creates problems in the design and implementation of effective systems. The successful handling of academic integration issues is critical to the success of eManagement in higher education, both internally and externally.

## 2 Academic Challenges

Confronted by the future problems of under funding, fragmentation, and competition among researchers, Universities have to create programs that support science-based initiatives to develop societies. Research environments should have modern equipment and information technology to attract and support young researchers.

A significant academic challenge concerning the application and integration of ICT is to ascertain the value and feasibility of distance education within the university context. While certain universities and colleges, especially in Europe, have

been in the forefront of delivering distance education for many years, the Internet and web-based technologies have had a dramatic impact on the marketplace allowing new entrants to become major competitors. These new entrants range from traditional universities to new profit-oriented entrants. While several of them have experienced difficult times, distance education will survive and probably flourish. Given a proper business model it can have a significant impact on economic development.

While distance education will be a challenge, curriculum issues will also be addressed. This century will experience a remarkable transformation in the transactions of business and commerce. eCommerce will be an enabler of this transformation, and eCurriculum must respond and contribute to these developments.

## 3 Administrative Challenges

The nature of academic life has changed during the past decades. More time is spent on preparing project proposals, sending applications to financiers, reporting ongoing projects and securing continuity of the research. Bureaucracy has increased in the context of global, EU, national, regional and local decision making. Administrative processes have become more complicated and laborious than earlier. The time spent in key processes, education and research, is diminishing and leading to lower academic quality.

ICT will play a more significant role in the administrative operations of the university. Most universities are now aware of the importance of building strong administrative systems. For example, many universities and schools have a common system to support the functions of admissions, financial aid, enrolment management, course scheduling, finan-

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cial functions, and development activities. The use of an enterprise system has allowed institutions to increase their efficiency throughout the organization, a fact that many commercial organizations are now acting on. Others have adopted the best-of-breed approach and are willing to deal with multiple vendors and to build integrating links.

During the next decade, Internet and web-based technologies will provide a wide range of student services such as admissions, registration, and payment processes. Students are now able to view their records such as transcripts, tuition statements and other pertinent information concerning their status. Integrating these applications into academic processes will be critical.

Presenters to be announced.

Time and location: Sunday, June 4, 2006, Hotel Golf Bled, 16.00 - 19.30. Those interested in the eUniversity Forum are welcome to contact the Co-Chairs:

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<http://www.BledConference.org/eAmber&eSilkRoad>

## **eSilk & eAmber Road Regions Meeting: Business & Government Executives & Professors**

### **Commitment To Making a Difference**

Objectives of the meeting are to:

- Establish contact with like-minded people: researchers, administrators, policy makers and advisers, businessmen, and other stakeholders.
- Raise awareness among such people of contemporary issues related to eCommerce.
- Begin building a network of institutional links and researchers for further collaboration in joint activities.
- Obtain first hand experience with existing applications of eCommerce in the Region.
- Establish an indication of the level of awareness of eCommerce issues and opportunities in the Silk & Amber Road regions.
- Identify opportunities for continued collaborative research into problems and possibilities for expanding eCommerce in the region.
- Stimulate inter-university cooperation in eCommerce along the eAmber & eSilk Road.
- Suggest an agenda for future collaborative research and development activities intended to further the aims of the meeting.

The old Silk Road and Amber Route are historical artifacts with reborn contemporary significant. The Amber Route wound its way from the Baltic countries in Eastern Europe to Venice that, also, was a terminus of the Silk Road albeit in a somewhat different time frame. The Amber Route was a Roman-age commercial route in the general 200 BC - 200 AD timeframe. The old Silk Road was a historical trade route (with its zenith in the 7-9th century) linking Asia and Europe that changed the nature of commerce in the medieval and renaissance world. Today, as in ancient times, these roads are a study in contrasts. These historical trading routes have commonalities yet distinctions both in the past and present and, perhaps, on into the future. Re-establishment of business and government relations on the nodes of the Silk Road and Amber Route towards creation of eAmber & eSilk Roads presents both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges common to both the renewed Amber and Silk roads are many. Culture and tradition vary dramatically. Awareness of the past, much less future potential, requires attention. Infrastructure elements along some parts of the roads are mature and futuristic while, along other parts, have far to go to merely catch up with modern times. Economic viability needs to be carefully examined as multiple choices and alternatives now exist that, clearly, were not present in ancient times. Political conventions give way to numerous forms of governance. Business procedures vary widely under differing government rules and regulations. Overall feasibility comes into question as to the ability of individuals, organizations and countries to achieve a degree of cooperation necessary to facilitate effective establishment of eAmber and eSilk roads.

Although the challenges are many, however, the potential rewards

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