FROM THE CEO
The Value of ACUTA:
From Information to Experience

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From supporting academia in the classroom to preparing for the unknowns of the Internet of Things, there is an increasing demand on the IT organization to support a large and diverse group of constituents with a growing list of needs.

Today's students, faculty, and administrators all bring their own desktops or laptops as well as other devices. Now, IT must also navigate the complexities of wearables, share-ables, and the like, all while supporting the ever-changing higher-education technology landscape.

As IT rapidly evolves from the "Information Organization" to the "Technology Experience Organization" and certainly more than just programmers and networkers behind a keyboard, there is more pressure on leadership to navigate and translate the needs of the business.

Welcome to the modern IT organization where titles such as analyst, project manager, and change agent are the new norm. As new technologies emerge, higher-ed IT professionals must have a much stronger understanding of the business they support. From admissions to advancement, the student life cycle is stronger but less clear than ever before.

How does this exponential pace of change affect the IT professional in higher education? What you have to know as well as what you have to do is probably very different from what you knew and did even five years ago. The challenge to keep up with new technologies even as you handle each day's responsibilities can be overwhelming.

This issue of the *Journal* looks at how IT adds real value to today's campus; but I want to remind you that ACUTA also adds real value to your career. Do you need in-depth information in a hurry? Experts are just a keystroke away on the ACUTA listserv. Are you planning to implement a new strategy or a new technology in the coming year? Look at ACUTA events for educational sessions that provide lessons from other campuses that have already been there. ACUTA provides a variety of resources including, best of all, a network of terrific people who are extremely intelligent, genuinely interested, and always ready to help.

My column in the June 2016 *ACUTA eNews* provides an overview of the extensive benefits that you receive as an ACUTA member. I encourage you to read through the list to be sure that you are taking advantage of all the benefits of your ACUTA membership.

The ACUTA-MiCTA Grant

I would like to highlight a new benefit that we were able to provide this year—adding more value to your ACUTA membershp as it contributes to your professional development.

In 2015, MiCTA's chief operating officer, Tim Von Hoff, attended the ACUTA Annual Conference in Atlanta and proposed an inspirational idea. What if MiCTA provided the funding for a technology research grant, and what if we were to offer to give it away to one or more of our shared members?

I was intrigued by the idea and perplexed by Tim's statement, "It isn't easy to give money away." But I did immediately recognize that the proposal was a huge win-win-win. I loved the concept of being in a position to GIVE money away to our members! Having spent 25 years with Columbia University in the City of New York, I recognized the importance of available funding for research technology projects, especially in this challenging economic time. So Tim and I put our heads together and set to work.

Getting Started

What were our first steps? First, Tim needed approval from the MiCTA Board of Directors for the grant—which he obtained. Then I needed ACUTA Board approval to proceed. So in September I presented a formal proposal explaining that MiCTA would like to work with ACUTA on a technology research grant project in the areas of higher-education IT and telecommunications. The grant or grants, depending upon who applied for what, would be funded by MiCTA, they would be broad in size, and they would provide enough support to enable some worthwhile projects.

A few elements of the proposed grant program would include the following:

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- They would provide competitive opportunities. We anticipated high interest from our collective members.
- Grant amounts would be based on available funds at MiCTA and determined before promotions could begin.
- Promotions would be through both ACUTA and MiCTA via email, listservs, social media, websites, and any additional marketing outlets deemed appropriate.

MiCTA awarded the grants to Texas A&M University and Morgan State University. Left to right: Jason McConnell, Texas A&M; Mark Burger and Brad Bouwkamp from MiCTA; Dr. Adebisi Oladipupo from Morgan State University; and Michele Morrison, BCIT, ACUTA president.

- Proposals would be reviewed by a committee of representatives from both ACUTA and MiCTA.
- Project results would be publicized and shared through both organizations. Results would be produced as white papers or case studies and as content for ACUTA and MiCTA websites and publications. We would also ask that grant recipients present the results at an ACUTA event as well as discuss the project on MiCTA Radio.
- Applicants must be non-profit, institutional members of both ACUTA and MiCTA.

Promoting the Opportunity

The ACUTA Board approved the request unanimously, and once we developed all the behind-the-scenes support, we established aggressive deadlines and planned to announce the grant at ACUTA's Winter Seminar in January.

Since our deadlines were tight, we decided to begin with a small review committee, chaired by Dr. Ron Kovac, ACUTA past president and IT director and professor at Ball State University. Other committee members include Chris Megill, ACUTA director-at-large, from The Georgetown University; Scott Claverie, ACUTA Awards Committee member representing the University of California at Chico; and Tim and me. The Committee is supported by ACUTA's chief strategy officer, Lisa Thornton.

One of the most fun promotions was the interview that Tim and I did with John Tanner, host of MiCTA Radio. That was done as soon as I arrived in New Orleans for ACUTA's Winter seminar

and was released during our seminar to help with the launch. Check it out on the MiCTA Radio site: https://soundcloud.com/mictatech/acuta-micta-technology-research-grant.

Tim and I were also interviewed that morning by Doug Green, editor of *Telecom Reseller,* and that podcast was also released during the seminar: http://telecomreseller.com/2016/01/22/acuta-and-micta-announce-research-grant/.

Considering the Applications

We received numerous inquiries about the research technology grant, and we received applications that met the established criteria from Morgan State University, Stevens Institute of Technology, Texas A&M University, the University of Nebraska at Kearny, and the University of Scranton. Honestly, all the projects were impressive, which made the selection process challenging.

- Morgan State submitted its vision of a recording studio where students, faculty and staff could create presentations, lectures, and online education that would change the way information is stored and consumed. Their Record and Go Studio project will improve pedagogy, competency-based education, and enhance student and employee professional development.
- In support of its strategic plan that includes technology at its core, student centricity, collaboration impact and excellence in all they do, Stevens sought to create an updated space for promoting the use of innovative technologies.
- Texas A&M requested funding for an undergraduate applications engineering student to support its Fixed Mobile Convergence Testlab initiative that has the capability of revolutionizing the future of fixed mobile convergence on campuses in the United States and across the globe.
- The University of Nebraska request was also to support a blended research team with a hands-on information networking and telecom student to expand its Networking and Telecom Lab.

- Creating a consolidated data repository was the goal of the University of Scranton to improve location and contact information accuracy, critical to 911 and emergency response teams.

After intense review and deliberation, we selected two schools, Morgan State University and Texas A&M, to receive a grant of $12,000 each. Stay tuned for project details as the research unfolds. Many future papers, presentations, and publications have been promised not only by the winners, but by all the applicants. There will be much more grant information in the near future.

Award Day

How exciting it was to share the opening of ACUTA's 45th Annual Conference with Mark Burger and Brad Bouwkamp from MiCTA as well as with both grant recipients, Dr. Adebisi Oladipupo from Morgan State University and Jason McConnell from Texas A&M University! The grant recipients received large replicas of the award checks and distinguished-looking award certificates from MiCTA and ACUTA, presented by Michele Morrison, ACUTA President from British Columbia Institute of Technology.

To date, both Morgan State and Texas A&M have provided proof of project initiation and have received their first real checks. Morgan State has also provided sufficient documentation of progress toward project completion, so has also received its second and final grant funds, and I have confidence that Texas A&M will soon follow their lead.

As the ACUTA Publications Committee points out in the editorial calendar, "In 2016 and beyond, IT professionals will be found in the trenches, behind the desks, and seated at the table planning strategies for the future. Hiring for a specific skill set? Think again. This issue will explain why the IT hat rack is very crowded on today's campus." And I hope I have explained how ACUTA is always there to support you—with excellent educational content, with funding, and with an ever-expanding variety of resources to help you do your job better.

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