

## Wide area network to bring PASSHE campuses together

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The SSHEnet executive committee met on the Edinboro University campus on Thursday, Nov. 12 and Friday, Nov. 13. The committee, according to Robert Lahr, director of information infrastructure for the office of the chancellor, met to discuss the "nitty, gritty details of operating the WAN (Wide Area Network) across all [state system] campuses." SSHEnet is the state system's WAN.

Comprised of administrative and technology personnel, the committee is

derived from a subsample of individuals from across the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). In addition to communicating through e-mail and teleconference, the committee meets in person twice a year.

A good portion of the nitty, gritty details of this meeting centered on obtaining stimulus dollars to maintain and increase the system's broadband. "The state system is involved in capturing stimulus dollars," said Lahr.

These dollars are available through ARRA - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery

Act). ARRA, according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, was signed into law by President Obama on Feb. 16. The act, in part, includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure.

Lahr hopes the state system can garner some of these dollars - \$4 million to be exact. "Higher bandwidth," said Lahr, "is a need that is not being met by private companies at reduced cost." The state system has not been awarded the money, according to Lahr, but has submitted an application.

The State System became aware of

the dollars because of their membership with various organizations watching what's going on in Washington D.C. and other areas.

"Stimulus proposals had a lot of interest for members this time around," said Tom Pavelcheck, who also attended the meeting representing West Chester University.

Currently, SSHEnet is provided by Level III communications, who have carved out a private network for the state system. After a recent bid proposal win, Verizon will take over as provider.

The WAN is utilized by Blackboard

users, administrators running SAP, the KLN library network, and other internet-based applications. SSHEnet, in comparison to the Internet that the general public utilizes, is "more secure," according to Lahr, and "increases the quality of services."

"SSHEnet is critical to the university," said Andrew Lawlor, vice president of technology and communications at EUP, "because it not only provides access to PASSHE-based applications, but it is our gateway to the Internet." Lawlor is the chief information technology officer (CITO) liaison to the committee.