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Open-communities research project receives $399,000 NSF grant

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EAU CLAIRE — Dr. Matt Germonprez, associate professor of information systems at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, is the recipient of a $399,094 grant from the National Science Foundation's Virtual Organizations as Sociotechnical Systems program. The grant will support research examining how and why organizations participate in open communities, as well as what universities should be teaching students about open community participation.

"The findings of this project will lead to the improved effectiveness of open communities in addressing societal and organizational challenges," Germonprez said. "We plan to apply our findings to higher education curriculum to create strong synergies between practice and education."

Germonprez's project, titled "Organizational Participation in Open Communities," continues a strong tradition of faculty research at UW-Eau Claire, Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich said.

"This is an excellent example of the kinds of innovative research being done by faculty across our university," Levin-Stankevich said. "This project will not only generate new knowledge about organizational behavior, it will apply that knowledge to enhancing curriculum and better preparing graduates to become leaders in business and industry in Wisconsin and beyond."

An open community is a community of people sharing time, energy and expertise in the ongoing creation of value for the participants and the overall system, Germonprez said. Members of an open community participate for the purpose of creating a joint enterprise, he said.

Germonprez and his team will use the Linux open-source community as the basis for their study. Linux, a computer operating system that has been developed collaboratively since 1991 with no one company responsible for its development or support, "has grown to become a force in computing, powering everything from the New York Stock Exchange to mobile phones

to supercomputers to consumer devices," according to The Linux Foundation's linux.com website.

Germonprez is the sole principle investigator on the three-year research project, which will run through 2014. Others on the project team are Brian Warner, mobile solutions manager at The Linux Foundation; Dr. Kenneth Kendall, distinguished professor of management in the School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University; Dr. Julie Kendall, professor of management in the School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University; and Dr. Lars Mathiassen, professor of computer information systems at Georgia State University.

Participating organizations include The Linux Foundation, IBM, Telco Planning Inc., Meyer Sound Laboratories Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co. The organizations are working closely with the project team in the development of research and pedagogical findings. UW-Eau Claire's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs assisted with the National Science Foundation grant application.

Through professional journal articles, presentations at conferences, book chapters, workshops and a website, the team will share its research results with other academicians to inform additional open-community research and to provide a new framework for teaching about open communities in the higher-education setting, Germonprez said. The research team also will meet with companies who participate in open communities and will share its results with organizations participating in the Linux open community during a three-day workshop in 2013.

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