

FAU links computers in Latin American Grid

8 universities, IBM align in science research

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Florida Atlantic University is now better connected to the Latin American community.

The Boca Raton-based university has become the 10th member of the Latin American Grid, an IBM-led venture that connects computers from the United States, Latin America and Spain. The project aims to get universities to work together for research and to identify top Hispanic students to work in the computer science field.

FAU already has two supercomputers, which are groups of processors that perform at powerful levels. These computers will be linked to about 1,500 computers at IBM, seven other universities and one of the world's most powerful supercomputers in Barcelona, Spain.

"In terms of research and types of grants you can go after, it's magnified when you have access to one of the world's fastest supercomputers," said Pete Martinez, vice president of IBM Consulting Services. He is based in Boca Raton.

FAU has applied for a \$20 million federal grant to conduct research with other universities in "bioinformatics," the science of working with vast sets of biological data.

Other universities already taking part in the year-old venture include the University of Miami, Florida International University, the University of North Florida in Jacksonville and the University of Puerto Rico, as well as universities in Mexico and Argentina.

The main focuses for the initiatives include hurricane mitigation, life sciences and health care, officials said. This is expected to enhance a partnership FAU already has with the University of Miami School of Medicine.

"We'll certainly be involved in looking at things like drug discoveries and susceptibility," said Larry Lemanski, FAU's vice president for research.

Another major component of the plan is identifying future talent, particularly in the Hispanic community. While Hispanics make up almost 15 percent of the U.S. population, they compose only about 4 percent of engineering and computer science graduates, Martinez said.

FAU has selected 21 students who will work on the supercomputer for class work and research.

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