

Area colleges ahead of game on sprinkler systems mandate

By Britt Carson

STAFF WRITER

Aurora Beacon News

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Area colleges are taking a proactive stance when it comes to sprinkler systems in their residence halls.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed a bill last month requiring dormitories and residence halls at all public and private colleges and universities in the state to have fire sprinkler systems installed by 2013.

Aurora University finished installing new sprinkler systems in three of its residence halls this summer. The sprinkler systems in the other two halls were completed more than a year ago.

School officials said that even before the new law went into effect, the safety of their students has always been a priority, and sprinkler systems help to address that.

"We're ahead of the game," said Al Benson, media relations director at Aurora University.

Paul Loscheider, vice president of business affairs at North Central College in Naperville, said the college also has a plan already in place for sprinkler systems.

"We should have them all done in the next three years," Loscheider said. "Our progress will far exceed the deadline."

North Central has 11 residence halls, and five of them have new sprinkler systems. The remaining buildings will have systems installed over the next three years.

"Residence halls are where people live and accidents can happen when they are sleeping," Loscheider said. "Students don't always listen. Occasionally, students will burn candles and then they fall asleep. We have been lucky the few fires we have had were contained to one room."

In addition, the residence hall directors and residence assistants also receive training on procedures in case of a fire.

"We do anything we can to help and taking precautions such as this helps a lot," Loscheider said.

Phil Brozynski, media relations manager at Benedictine University in Lisle, said the college's four residence halls are already equipped with sprinkler systems.

The Fire Sprinkler Dormitory Act requires sprinkler systems to be installed in all new and existing residence halls within the next eight years. The Fire Sprinkler Dormitory Revolving Loan Fund will provide low-interest loans for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in dormitories to colleges and universities. The loan is administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Illinois Finance Authority.

Staff writer Justina Wang contributed to this story.

09/06/04

North Central College gets its intimate theater facility

By Kari Allen Daily Herald Staff Writer

Posted Thursday, September 09, 2004

It will be just as Brian Lynch dreamed.

Shakespearean dramas and Neil Simon comedies will be performed before intimate but sold-out crowds. Students will receive immediate feedback from the audience.

Lynch, North Central College's fine arts outreach director, has dreamed about just such a venue, and now that dream is becoming a reality.

The Naperville college is purchasing Central Baptist Church, formerly Grace Evangelical Church, at 31 S. Ellsworth St. The facility primarily will be used for art and theater programs and eventually will include a 350-seat thrust stage theater - much smaller than the 1,050-seat facility at Pfeiffer Hall.

"This will give a whole different complexion to the theater program, having a space that's that intimate," Lynch said.

The Naperville City Council rezoned the church this week and added the property to the college's master land use plan. The move cleared the way for the college to obtain more space for art and theater.

As enrollment in North Central's arts programs has increased, music groups sometimes are forced to rehearse or perform off campus. Art instructors likewise are limited in the courses they can offer because of lack of space.

The college ran out of room for the arts years ago, President Harold Wilde said.

Now, it's starting to add more space. In addition to the church facility, the college eventually plans to build a bigger fine arts center at Ellsworth Street and Chicago Avenue.

The church site offers an additional 23,000 square feet, while the larger fine arts center should measure between 50,000 and 60,000 square feet and will be used primarily for music. The longer-term fine arts center is expected to include a 650-seat concert hall and is projected to cost between \$18 million and \$20 million.

The college plans to start working on the church facility in January and complete the

first phase, including repairs and technology additions, by next June for \$1.2 million.

The smaller theater will be added in the second phase and officials aren't sure exactly when it will take shape.

But Lynch is happy to know it's officially part of the plans.

"This will make a huge difference. This is much more fitting for a straight dramatic production," he said. "The students are starting to hear bits and pieces about this, and they're just giggling."

National-Louis plans new campus

Chicago Tribune

Ted Gregory

Published September 9, 2004

LISLE -- National-Louis University will open a west-suburban campus in January in Lisle, an estimated \$13.5 million project that will include 42 classrooms, computer labs, library, conference rooms, a public cafe and student lounges, school officials announced Wednesday.

"This is an exciting new chapter in the history of National-Louis University," President Curtis McCray said in a statement. "The west-suburban campus in Lisle will be an outstanding example of modern college campus design that will accommodate traditional-age students and our busy adult learners."

The campus, constructed in two buildings at the Corporetum complex south of Interstate Highway 88 and east of Illinois Highway 53, will replace National-Louis' 5.6-acre campus in the former DuPage County Courthouse, jail and administrative building in downtown Wheaton. School officials said the cost of renovating the Wheaton campus to accommodate a growing enrollment was too high.

The Wheaton campus enrolled 2,500 students this year, up from about 700 when the school opened the campus in 1993.

National-Louis, a 119-year-old university, also has campuses in Chicago's Loop; Evanston; Wheeling; Elgin; Washington, D.C.; Florida and Poland.

West Chicago developer Airhart Construction and Focus Development Inc. of Northbrook are planning to convert the Wheaton campus into townhouses and condominiums. The Wheaton Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval of the project in August and the city attorney is drafting an ordinance that, if approved by the City Council, would authorize construction, said Brad Boese, Wheaton staff planner.

University of Michigan Gets a \$100 Million Gift

New York Times

By GREG WINTER

Published: September 9, 2004

The University of Michigan has received its largest gift ever, \$100 million, from a New York real estate magnate.

The donor is Stephen M. Ross, the chairman of the Related Companies, which built the \$1.7 billion Time Warner Center on Columbus Circle. Mr. Ross is now working to bring the Olympics to New York in 2012.

Mr. Ross, a native of Detroit and a Michigan graduate, said he gave the money to establish what he hoped would become the nation's "best business school," anchored by an "iconic, modern building" on Michigan's campus. The university described the gift as the largest ever given to a business school, giving ample reason for the school to bear Mr. Ross's name.

"Naming is in perpetuity, so you only get to do this once," said Robert J. Dolan, dean of the business school. "That's why it's such a large gift." The official announcement of the gift is scheduled for Thursday.

Tufts University said Wednesday that it had also received its largest donation ever, \$50 million from the Cummings Foundation, to support its veterinary school. The foundation was started by William and Joyce Cummings, a Massachusetts real estate developer and his wife.

Some university officials cautioned against interpreting the two milestones as a sign that university fund-raising was particularly strong nationwide.

"It's always hard to look out and say, 'Does this reflect anything about the economy or gifts as a whole?' " said Lawrence S. Bacow, the president of Tufts. "Gifts of this magnitude are long in the making."

Even so, some indicators show that gift-giving, including to colleges and universities, has gathered momentum this year. According to the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, the number of

donations valued at \$1 million or more rose to 351 in the second quarter of 2004, a 33 percent increase from the same period last year and a 35 percent increase from the first quarter of this year. More than half of those donations, moreover, supported higher education.



from the September 09, 2004 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0909/p08s02-comv.html>

End the Athletics Arms Race

Contrary to a widely held assumption, a college or university with a champion sports team doesn't necessarily mean the school attracts more or better students or reaps the benefit of bigger alumni gifts.

In fact, a new study by the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics shows those benefits to be "very small," according to its author, Robert Frank, a Cornell University professor.

Hmmm. Maybe colleges should be sinking less money into recruiting and maintaining winning teams. After all, winners *and* losers will always be a part of college sports.

Some college athletic budgets do seem out of whack: At the University of Michigan, for example, nearly \$50 million was spent on athletics in the 2003-04 school year. Athletic budgets rose at more than twice the rate of the total budgets of universities in Division 1 schools between 1995 and 2001. Not only that, but the Knight study shows that most athletics departments are spending more money than they're taking in.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association already has been involved in trying to rein in the abuses caused by the intense competition among colleges to woo star athletes. It implemented a set of reforms last month aimed at curbing the celebrity status of athletes on campus by prohibiting, for instance, colleges from indulging in sponsoring lavish trips by private jet. Surely, the NCAA could expand its role in helping stem the athletics arms race, especially now that it appears all that effort doesn't translate into more cash or students for the schools.

Mr. Frank also posts an intriguing, if wishful, point: "If all [higher ed] institutions cut back their spending together, then a competitive balance would still be maintained."

Certainly, schools shouldn't rely exclusively on their sports teams to attract students. It's time to adjust the balance and reset priorities.

A school of thought on college costs

Dear Mr. Berko: My wife and I are both 55. She's an office manager earning \$38,000 and I'm a salesman who makes between \$55,000 and \$70,000 a year. We have two sons. The oldest joined the Navy five years ago and our youngest just got accepted to an Ivy League college where the tuition exceeds \$32,000 a year.

We began saving for both sons' college education costs when they were born and cannot qualify for financial aid. But we failed to move into more conservative issues before the bear market began in 2000. As a result, the college accounts (for both boys) is now valued at \$41,000, which is down from its high of \$84,000. My wife and I have spent many evenings agonizing over our possible choices so we can pay for our son's tuition. It seems that we have five choices:



Malcolm Berko

Taking Stock

1. Take out a home equity loan.
 2. Sell our large home and (because both sons are gone) move to a smaller home and use the difference in price to help pay for tuition.
 3. Sell some of the mutuals in our 401(k) plans.
 4. Ask both our retired parents to help us pay the tuition. Our parents don't have excess money but they seem to be modestly comfortable and we don't think it would affect their lifestyle much if each set of grandparents contributed \$400 to \$500 a month. And finally,
 5. A little bit from all of the above.
- My wife thinks we should sell our 401(k) mutuals and ask each of our parents for help. Please help us make a decision. I favor selling our large home (it has a small mortgage) and asking our parents to help us pay the tuition expenses.

— RT, Springfield

Dear RT: The last 10 words of the last sentence in your letter strikes terror in my heart. Don't you dare ask your folks for a dime! It's insufferably presumptuous, unforgivably selfish and cruelly uncaring that you would even fantasize about asking your parents for the kid's tuition.

Those grandparents earned their "modestly comfortable" lifestyles and you have the gall to take some of it from them — considering all they must have given each of you from tots to teens to parenthood.

Both of you have excellent mutual funds in your 401(k)s. However, they, too, are about 40 percent lower from their 2000 peak. The most important reason you shouldn't invade your 401(k)s concerns your retirement in 12 years.

♦ Turn to **BERKO, B2**

BERKO

From Page B1

If you take money from your 401(k) you may be forced to collect food stamps and postpone necessary health care visits.

Your combined 401(k)s of \$112,000 plus the value of your home might not keep you in peanuts, pretzels and beer when you both retire. You're going to need a lot more money and you're both bloody fools if you allow your son to deprive you of a "modestly comfortable" retirement as you would your folks.

Here's my advice. if you fail to follow it, you'll end up on the doorsteps of the Salvation Army. Take that \$41,000 of college money and invest it in one of those variable annuities that guarantees you minimum 6 percent cash on cash return. Forget about it for a dozen years, at which

time you'll both be 67, hopefully retired, collecting Social Security and that \$41,000 (6 percent doubles in 12 years) will be worth a minimum of \$82,000. Meanwhile, commence an individual retirement account (contribute the maximum) and continue contributing the maximum to your current 401(k)s.

Here are alternatives for the kid.

1. Like his brother, tell him to join the armed services and allow the Army, Navy or Air Force to pay for his college costs.

2. There are a number of excellent community colleges in your area where the tuition for a full course load costs less than \$3,000 a year. Meanwhile, the kid can work evenings for beer and pizza.

3. If the kid got accepted to an Ivy League school, he must have a few brains in his skull. Tell the kid to search for some academic scholarships and there are a bunch of them just pleading for applicants.

4. Tell the kid to get a full-time

day job with a big corporation and take night courses. Many big companies will reimburse tuition payments if the employee passes his course work.

You do not have an obligation to pay for your kid's college education. The National Teachers Association, the Association of University Professors, etc., have done a credible propaganda job convincing parents that they have an responsibility to pay for their kids' college costs. Both of you, like other impressionable, naive parents, swallowed the hook and bait.

Your responsibility is to make certain that you have enough bucks to be "modestly comfortable" in your retirement so you won't have to beg either of your sons for money when you hang up your tools.

Please address your financial questions to Berko at P.O. Box 1416, Boca Raton, FL 33429 or e-mail him at malber@adelphia.net.

INTERNATIONAL

Taking on Japan's Red Tape

School's Experience Is Lesson in Rigors Facing Foreign Investors

By SEBASTIAN MOFFETT

NOW THAT RAUCOUS trade disputes are a thing of the past, some of the biggest remaining obstacles to doing business in Japan are the country's web of bureaucratic regulations.

One U.S. school's experience shows the challenges involved. Two decades after Temple University set up its Tokyo campus, the Philadelphia school is the only U.S. university offering full-degree courses. Forty U.S. colleges had Japanese campuses at the height of Japan's late-1980s bubble economy, but most of them lost patience and left.

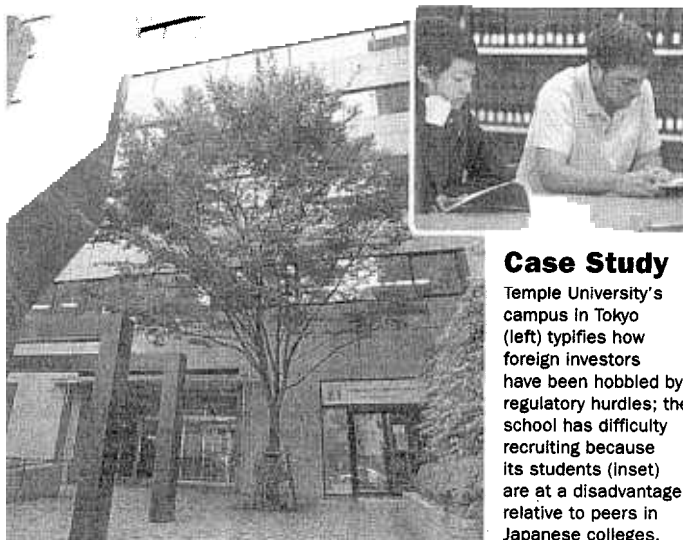
One reason: The Ministry of Education in Tokyo sets criteria for official universities that many have found impossible to fulfill. Temple isn't recognized as an official university in Japan, and that in turn discourages potential students. They aren't official "university students," so they can't get student discounts for their rail passes, they can't get student exemption from paying into the national pension system, and they only were recently allowed to advance to Japanese graduate schools.

"The regulations inhibited our activity to recruit students," says Kirk Patterson, dean of Temple University Japan. "Their parents would say, 'You're not a real school.'"

Education is just one area where regulations are forming roadblocks. The U.S. government and American Chamber of Commerce in Japan are trying to persuade Japan to get rid of bans on for-profit health-care corporations and restrictions on mergers and acquisitions. "Everyone [in Japan] has a knee-jerk reaction that, everything being equal, we want to keep foreigners out of the country," says Nicholas Benes, chairman of the ACCJ's Foreign Direct Investment Task Force.

Such setbacks may be one reason foreign direct investment into Japan still is tiny, totaling about 2% of gross domestic product, compared with 19% in the U.S. and 39% in the United Kingdom. The Keidanren, Japan's leading business organization, argues that more FDI would create jobs, stimulate domestic competition and introduce new technology and business models to Japan. "The resulting virtuous cycle created in Japan as an investment host will boost the domestic economy," it said in a 2002 proposal. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed, and last year called for a doubling of accumulated foreign direct investment by 2008.

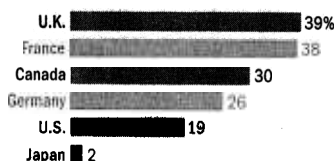
In education, the Keidanren has complained about the dearth of business schools in Japan. Economists say the relatively high unemployment rate among the young could be alleviated by equipping them with the skills required by buoyant industrial sectors such as information technology—something more-flex-



Case Study

Temple University's campus in Tokyo (left) typifies how foreign investors have been hobbled by regulatory hurdles; the school has difficulty recruiting because its students (inset) are at a disadvantage relative to peers in Japanese colleges.

Inward foreign direct investment in select nations, on a stock basis* as a percentage of nominal GDP:



*Value of the share of affiliate enterprises and reserves attributable to a parent enterprise, plus affiliates' net indebtedness to a parent

Note: As of Dec. 31, 2002

Source: IMF/U.S. government

ible schools might help accomplish.

Temple fell short of a host of Ministry of Education criteria to qualify as an official university. Japanese universities must own their buildings, and with less than a 25% debt-equity ratio. They are required to have their own sports field and gym, and the campus needs to cover a certain surface area per student. Temple rents the bottom half of an office block in central Tokyo and has no sports facilities.

The rules are so stringent that Temple sometimes benefits from its status: As accredited Japanese universities need government approval for new programs, Temple cuts and adds majors as it wishes. "I'm really afraid that...there would be a whole limitless list of things we were required to do," Mr. Patterson says. "If we could solve the problems without becoming a *gakko hojin* [official university], that would be best."

The downside of the lack of status goes beyond problems for students. Because Temple isn't an official university,

it can't sponsor foreign students for visas. Since it recently started turning a profit, Temple has to pay tax on earnings like a private corporation—official Japanese universities don't. Temple is aiming to build a new campus in 2008, but donations to Temple are taxed as income. When it finally buys a site, it will have to pay a 1.3% property-acquisition tax, from which official universities are exempt.

Recently, Temple has found hope in the form of changes promoted by Mr. Koizumi. One of the prime minister's pet projects is a deregulation program using Special Structural Reform Zones, under which regional governments can apply to loosen regulations. They first need to gain permission from central-government bureaucrats—but the bureaucrats have to make public the reasons for any rejection.

In June 2003, Temple applied for special status to be granted to foreign universities. The ministry essentially rejected this, as well as a subsequent, modified application.

Recently, there have been signs of progress. The education ministry last week gave Temple an assurance that it would cooperate. It is likely to start to recognize degrees gained at Temple's Tokyo campus in the same way that it recognizes those from Philadelphia.

Still, in a further illustration of how laborious change can be in Japan, the education ministry now has to work on other ministries—the Ministry of Justice for visas, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport for rail passes, and the Ministry of Finance for tax status. First signs indicate victories on rail passes and visas, though not taxes.

"They realized we weren't going to go away," Mr. Patterson says. "My argument is, 'This is fundamentally good for Japan.'"

PERSONAL FINANCE

States Overhaul Some 529 Plans, Expand Choices

By ANNE MARIE CHAKER

IN WHAT AMOUNTS to a back-to-school gift for parents, states with some of the biggest 529 college-savings plans are rolling out new and improved programs.

At least one state has fired the fund company that managed its program. Some states have greatly expanded the menu of investment options. And others are negotiating better fees with their fund companies—or signing up new ones—as their old contracts expire. These changes are happening largely in the “direct-sold” 529 savings plans, which are purchased without a financial adviser.

The 529 savings plans, named after a section of the tax code, enable parents

to save for their children’s educational expenses tax-free. The savings plans are similar to tax-deferred retirement plans, with the difference being that withdrawals aren’t subject to federal income taxes if they are used for educational purposes.

The revamps come on the heels of the past year’s mutual-fund scandals, when a number of fund companies were accused by securities regulators of improper trading practices that benefited a select group of institutional investors. Some of the underlying funds in those state 529 plans have been managed by such companies. As a result, some of those plans reported a dip in contributions and enrollments—while others saw investors rolling over their accounts to other states’ plans.

Some state plans say the changes were propelled in part by concerns about how the turmoil in the mutual-fund industry would affect their reputation. Indeed, “folks who were thinking about investing and looking into a 529 held off,” says Michael Parker, executive director of Oregon’s state-run 529 College Savings Network.

Now, after the Securities and Exchange Commission has convened a task force to review 529 savings plans—both the direct- and adviser-sold varieties—states are looking to make them more investor-friendly by simplifying their fee structures and offering more low-cost options.

“The mutual-fund industry was under such a shadow that the states really sat back and said, ‘We have to do something to make [investing] simpler and less frightening for people,’” says Andrea Feirstein, a 529 consultant in New York who advises states and financial institutions.

During recent years, the amount of money flowing into state 529 plans has skyrocketed. In March, assets in these plans totaled \$51.09 billion, up 74% from a year earlier, according to the College Savings Plan Network, a Lexington, Ky., research group. Of the total, 78% is in savings plans, about three-fourths of which are sold through advisers.

Starting in the late fall, Colorado will roll out a wider range of investment portfolios, including lower-cost index funds, which try to match an index’s performance rather than outperform it. Annual fees are expected to drop by nearly a third.

Virginia, meanwhile, plans to reduce its enrollment fees to \$25 from \$85 starting Oct. 1. In May, Ohio—whose plan continues to be administered in part by Putnam Investments, which paid \$100 million in penalties to settle charges that it engaged in improper trading—added 15 new Vanguard index-fund options with lower fees.

Colorado’s new choices include as many as 11 new mutual-fund-based options, up from the current seven. They will range from “age-based” ones, where investments become more conservative as the beneficiary ages, to “static” portfolios, where investments don’t change. The options will be managed by the Vanguard Group and Uprromise Investments Inc., when the contract with current fund manager Citigroup Asset Management expires sometime at the end of the year. Investors who go through an adviser, however, will still be able to buy 529 plans through the Citigroup unit.

The new options will have annual fees of 0.75% for investors who buy them directly, and a possible \$20 annual maintenance fee

for nonresidents. That’s compared with current fees of as much as 1.09% for a resident. A consumer who contributes \$5,000 a year would have \$4,744 more at the end of 18 years under one of the state’s new plans than under one of its current plans, assuming a 5% annual rate of return.

Later this month, West Virginia will offer 17 new direct-sold portfolios, including more passively managed fund options, with fees as low as 0.88%. Fees were previously set at a flat 1.16% for all portfolio options in the current direct-sold plan. The program manager will still be Hartford Financial Services Group Inc., but now nonresidents will be able to buy directly.

Rhode Island’s contract with Alliance Capital previously had annual fees set at an average of 1% for all five mutual-fund-based portfolio options. Starting this year, the annual fee rates became as low as 0.76%. (Only residents can buy these plans directly.)

And last fall, Oregon’s 529 College Savings Network fired Strong Financial Corp. after its chairman was accused of personally profiting from improper trading of the company’s funds. In February, the state hired Oppenheimer Funds as its direct-sold 529-program manager, offering new investment options and a lower fee structure that took effect last week.

Saving Up For College

What to consider when choosing a 529 savings plan:

- Some states **levy extra fees** to out-of-state account holders.
- About half of all states offer **tax deductions** to residents.
- Use the **529 Evaluator** at Savingforcollege.com to compare plans.

The 411 on 529s

Here’s a look at some directly sold 529 plans that are revamping investment options or cutting fees.

STATE	CHANGES
Colorado	A new investment lineup will come out this fall, with fees as low as 0.75% of assets compared with current fees of as much as 1.09%.
Ohio	In May, added 15 new low-fee Vanguard group index options to its 13 actively managed Putnam options.
Oregon	New investment options and a lower fee structure came into effect last week with fees as low as 0.88%, compared with the current 1.25% for most options.
Rhode Island*	New deal with Alliance Capital Management cuts fees to as low as 0.76%, compared with a previous average of 1% for all mutual fund-based portfolio options.
Virginia	Starting in October, the enrollment fee will be cut to \$25 from \$85.
West Virginia	Starting later this month, there will be a new lineup of portfolio options, with fees as low as 0.88%, down from current flat rate of 1.16% for all options.
Wisconsin	Consumers can buy into a broader range of options, in addition to the previous seven Strong Financial fund options that had a flat 1.15% fee. One example is a passively managed Vanguard fund with fees as low as 0.45%.

* Out-of-state residents must go through an adviser.

Source: The states

The average Oppenheimer fees will range from 0.77% to 1.04% for all investors in all seven portfolio options. Fees were previously 1.25% for five of the six portfolio options, with nonresidents paying an extra \$30 annually. In addition, consumers will be able to buy into four passively managed Vanguard portfolios. The Vanguard options’ annual fees will range from 0.33% to 0.61%. Nonresidents will pay an extra \$20 a year for each Vanguard portfolio.

The fee reductions could potentially save investors thousands of dollars over the life of their plans. In Oregon, for

example, an investor who contributes \$5,000 a year could now have as much as \$13,332 more at the end of 18 years under one of the new plans, assuming a 5% annual rate of return.

All these changes could inspire more people, lured by lower fees, to jump to another state 529 plan. But consumers may want to think twice before doing that: About half of all states offer state-income tax deductions to residents who invest in their own state’s plan. Those tax benefits could outweigh any lower fees offered by an out-of-state plan.

NIU Media Coverage

**A roundup of
recent
print media coverage**

NIU plans 175-mile high-speed fiber-optic loop

Network would link Naperville, Batavia, DeKalb

By Jennifer Taylor

Special to the Tribune

Published September 9, 2004

Northern Illinois University Wednesday announced plans to create an ultra-high-speed fiber-optic network that would link northern Illinois to technology currently available only at elite research facilities in Chicago.

NIU officials are touting the plan as a huge boon to research and economic development efforts throughout the region.

The proposed non-residential network, dubbed NIUNet, would consist of a 175-mile fiber-optic loop stretching from DeKalb to Batavia to Naperville along Interstate Highway 88, connecting to Chicago, the I-WIRE Network, Argonne National Laboratory and other national research networks through Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia. The network would then loop back along Interstate Highway 90 to Hoffman Estates and west to Rockford before heading south along Interstate Highway 39 to Rochelle and back to DeKalb.

Walter Czerniak, NIU's associate vice president for information technology, said the fiber-optic network is as important as roads, water and sewers, because the number of businesses relying on fiber-optic connectivity is growing rapidly and many wouldn't consider establishing operations in a city unless the infrastructure is there.

Naperville City Manager Peter Burchard supported the importance of businesses having access to fiber-optic cable and said the city provides that service to businesses in city limits through its electrical grid. NIUNet would help connect the city to the outside world, he said.

"This could be the best game around," Burchard said of the proposal. But, he added, "The proof is in the pudding."

For Rochelle Mayor Chet Olson, the network presents an opportunity for the region and the town of

5,900 to compete with big cities for white-collar jobs.

"We are a region that can all benefit from this. We are competing with the big cities [on the East and West Coasts]," said Olson, who is working with the university and Rockford officials to lay new fiber-optic cable between Rochelle and Rockford. That segment would cost about \$2 million, an expense Olson hopes to offset through grants and other collaborations.

The high-speed connection also would advance health-care technology, benefit area schools and keep high-tech jobs from leaving for other areas of the country that already have fiber optic infrastructure, officials said. Schools linked to the network could tap into data-intensive Internet lessons with real-time teleconference instruction led by scientists or educators worldwide. Doctors could transmit MRIs, CAT scans, and X-rays in seconds.

The university will invest about \$1.5 million during the next three years to complete the NIUNet ring. The university expects to receive about \$1 million in state funding; the other half-million dollars will come from university funds.

Czerniak said the first segment of the loop, from NIU's DeKalb campus to its Naperville campus and Fermilab in Batavia, is expected to be completed by spring.

NIU will put zip into the Net

I-88 fiber optics: NIU's new online network to accelerate research, business

By Justina Wang

STAFF WRITER

Aurora Beacon News
9-9-04

NAPERVILLE — Apparently, there's no speed limit on the information superhighway.

Though high-speed dial up, DSL and broadband have raced to make the Internet faster and faster in recent years, Northern Illinois University officials have devised a plan to transfer huge loads of data in mere seconds to communities throughout Northern Illinois.

For example, full-length movies take more than six hours to download on broadband Internet. NIU officials say they know how to do it in 30 seconds.

A new ultra-high-speed Internet network will connect west suburban cities, schools, hospitals and research facilities within the next three years, NIU officials announced Wednesday.

"NIUNet," a 175-mile fiber optic loop that will run underneath Interstates 88 and 90, will provide Internet communication between the local partners much faster than existing networks, officials said.

While Chicago and several other major cities already have similar high-speed networks in place, NIUNet is the first of its kind in the suburban area.

"This can open a whole new world of teaching and learning," said NIU President John Peters.

Officials plan to run two pairs of fiber optic cables around the main NIU campus in DeKalb, and in satellite campuses in Batavia, Naperville, Hoffman Estates, Belvidere, Rockford and Rochelle. One set will be strictly non-commercial and non-residential and used for research purposes at schools, hospitals and other educational centers. Another set will be used by the Illinois Municipal Broadband Communications Association and will eventually provide service for private parties.

The network will not only help advance research at NIU, but also fulfill the "mission of public universities: to help the economic development of the region," Peters said.

NIUNet will boost the number of high-tech jobs and companies coming to local towns, he said. Employees will have more opportunities to telecommute and consumers will have access to business in other areas.

The network will also benefit doctors and patients, added NIU professor David Gunkel. Although major urban hospitals have quick access to the latest medical information, regional and rural hospitals can't afford the same expertise. But with NIUNet, data can be quickly sent to regional hospitals, Gunkel said.

The network was originally planned to connect NIU campuses in Hoffman Estates, Naperville, DeKalb and Rockford. But because of cost concerns, officials discovered that the "loop" around the four campuses included potential partners who could also benefit from the connection.

They partnered with the Illinois Municipal Broadband Communications Association, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia and local municipalities to create the project.

"What none of us could do by ourselves, all of us could do together," Peters said. "And that is to create a fiber-optic loop."

The project, which will cost an estimated total of \$6 million, will only cost NIU \$1.5 million, said Wally Czerniak, head of NIU's information technology. None of these costs will require student contributions.

The first phase of the project has already begun, as links from NIU's DeKalb campus to its Naperville campus and Fermilab in Batavia are under way. Officials are still working on installing cable under parts of the roads, leasing the existing cable under the tollway, and creating access points from each city to the tollway.

Once the project is completed, individual cities will oversee and maintain their portion of the fiber-optic loop, officials said.

Super-high-speed Internet access could be business lure

By **Larry Avila**

business editor

Naperville Sun

9-9-04

A proposal by Northern Illinois University to bring super-high-speed Internet access to the Chicago area also could be an incentive to lure more technology companies to the region.

"A dedicated high-speed research network could open doors to other entities," NIU President John Peters said during a press conference Wednesday. The college unveiled NIUNet, a dedicated Internet research network capable of delivering speeds up to 1 gigabyte per second, nearly 1,000 times faster than most broadband connections available to homes and businesses today.

Much of the infrastructure to deliver Internet access speeds of NIUNet already is in place around the Chicago area, Peters said. The service only is meant for research purposes, but it may be possible to piggyback access for residential and business services down the road.

While broadband access is widely available in the Chicago area, speeds offered by NIUNet could benefit economic development programs around the region.

"High-tech firms could find it attractive," Peters said. "Lack of high-speed access does make it difficult to attract research companies that need that kind of speed."

Robert Gleeson, director of the Center for Governmental Studies at NIU, said creating NIUNet will help ensure that northern Illinois remains a player in the global marketplace.

He said the core of the global economy today is the ability of companies to facilitate creativity in their people.

That means that there is a distinct advantage in having employees around the world so that they can bring different viewpoints to the creative process, Gleeson said. But to do this efficiently, it requires high-speed networks like NIUNet.

For example, research and development in manufacturing would greatly benefit, Gleeson said. Engineers around the world would be able to simultaneously access computer-aided design files, working together in a way that closely approximates the benefits of face-to-face interaction.

Because CAD files would be accessible via NIUNet, it would reduce travel costs for those engineers.

Offering high-speed connectivity has benefited many Asian countries, Gleeson said.

"Singapore for example has become a technology center because they do offer very high-speed access, so we know it's an effective lure," he said. "This kind of connectivity will allow our small and midsize manufacturers to remain competitive and keep jobs from being outsourced outside the U.S."

NIU unveils plan for regional super-high-speed Web access

By **Larry Avila**

business editor

Naperville Sun

9-9-04

Connection will travel a gigabyte per second

By **Larry Avila**

business editor

Just recently, broadband access to the Internet at 1.5 megabytes per second was thought of as blazing fast by most Web surfers.

This may not be the case anymore. As more Web sites post animation and video on their Web pages, even faster connections may be needed to fully experience a site's features.

"To get to the beginning, it took us a lot of steps to reach the beginning," John Peters, president of Northern Illinois University said at a press conference Wednesday at its Naperville campus, where the college unveiled its plan to install an ultra-fast fiber-optic communications network in the Chicago area.

This isn't just any broadband connection. The college's network, dubbed NIUNet, will offer Web access at speeds nearing 1,000 megabytes, or one gigabyte, per second.

Peters said right now, Internet access at this high rate of speed only is accessible to the region's top research centers such as Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Argonne National Laboratory and at some of the state's universities. NIUNet also would link to other high-speed research networks around the country.

NIUNet initially will link the college's main campus to its satellite campus in Naperville and Fermilab. The ultimate goal is to link all of NIU's satellite campuses, which would include Rockford and Hoffman Estates, to the main campus and make NIUNet accessible to other colleges, school districts, government agencies, hospitals and other public and private research centers around the Chicago area.

NIUNet is not intended for residential or commercial access, Peters said. Its sole purpose is for research applications.

Making super-high-speed Internet access more readily available around the region won't come cheap, said Wally Czerniak, head of NIU's information technology division.

NIUNet will require about 175 miles of fiber-optic cable — some of which already is in place — that would circle the Chicago area. Switching equipment also will be needed for data transfer.

NIU is committing about \$1.5 million over the next three years toward the project. Czerniak estimated the full network could cost as much as \$6 million to install and take about three years to complete.

"If we had the money, it could be done today," Czerniak said. NIU is not using any of its general fund revenues for the project, but instead will rely on state grants and in-kind contributions to pay for its share.

Czerniak said while the cost is high, there is a lot of interest in making super-high-speed Internet access more readily available.

NIUNet can bring many benefits, said Robert Gleeson, director of the NIU Center for Governmental Studies.

Schools for example linked to the network would have the potential to tap into data-intensive Internet lessons with real-time teleconference instruction led by scientists or educators around the world, he said. Doctors would have quick access to massive databases and could use the network to quickly transmit MRIs, CT scans or X-rays from one hospital to another.

Several communities, including Naperville, as well as school District 428 in DeKalb, are involved with making NIUNet a reality. NIU officials said they hope communities, government agencies and businesses will assist with the remaining installation costs.

Czerniak said the first phase of NIUNet should be online this spring, meaning Naperville-based research facilities and school districts will be able to access the service, though costs have not been determined.

Naperville does hold an advantage over some communities, said City Manager Peter Burchard. The city already has about 80 to 90 miles of fiber-optic lines in the ground that could connect to NIUNet.

The fiber-optic lines are currently used to transmit electricity as well as data but could easily accommodate NIUNet access, according to city staff.

Don Carlsen, information technology director for the city of Naperville, said the city is conducting a rate study to determine what to charge for access to NIUNet. The rate study should be completed by the spring.

"We can offer connection to NIUNet," Carlsen said.

NIU's 'Apprentice' class helps students trump competition

By Bob Susnjara Daily Herald Staff Writer

Posted Thursday, September 09, 2004

If Donald Trump was only known for his money-losing casino company, Northern Illinois University might have raised some eyebrows by creating a class based on his business acumen.

However, it's Trump's success in other ventures that's been seized by NIU College of Business. The school has launched a one-credit class based on Trump's NBC reality show, "The Apprentice," which is returning for its second season tonight.



Mary Beth Nolan/Daily Herald

Denise Schoenbachler, who heads Northern Illinois' marketing department, pushed for "The Apprentice" class after it was suggested by her son, Brett, and his classmate, Liz Siegel, both students at the DeKalb school.

Schoenbachler said students are learning real-life business lessons in the six-week class. One eye-opener occurred for those aspiring to an upper-level management job when the first four students were "fired."

"We want them to have fun with it," Schoenbachler said. "We want them to learn about healthy competition."

Lisa Vicicondi, 21, of Wheaton is among the students participating in "The Apprentice" class. One lesson the senior marketing major said she's learned is that friendships must be set aside when business is conducted in the academic boardroom.

"You can kind of get a taste of corporate culture," Vicicondi said of the class. "It's just like the show."

Some critics in academia say not all lessons coming from the "The Apprentice" are worthwhile.

David Cadden, professor of management at Quinnipiac University's business school in Hamden, Conn., questioned why "The Apprentice" needs a scapegoat to fire instead of trying to find solutions to a problem. He also has other criticisms of the show.

Nonetheless, as a one-credit course, Cadden doesn't see any harm in Northern

Illinois mimicking the show.

"A one-credit course, everyone knows it's a quickie and you can have a lot of fun," he said.

Northern Illinois' class works like this:

Four teams of four students opened the first week of class late last month. All assigned tasks are related to the marketing curriculum, such as fund-raising, advertising and sales.

Students have until Monday to complete the latest challenge, which is to raise cash for the local USO's effort to buy personal items for soldiers in Iraq.

"It has to be a legitimate way to raise money," Schoenbachler said. "It has to be ethical."

Three Northern Illinois College of Business graduates play the Trump role in the boardroom where the class meets on Mondays. The alumni, with feedback from teachers, determine winning teams and announce who's fired.

After more firings at Monday's class, there will be two reconfigured teams of four members vying for \$1,000 in scholarship money for each pupil, funded by private donations. The second-place team will receive \$500 per member.

Fired students still must report to class each week until the Oct. 4 conclusion. A canned student's grade can move from C to B by writing a paper on "The Apprentice" experience.

Carol DeMoranville, an associate marketing professor who's one of the teachers for "The Apprentice" class, said the students are learning more than just how to be creative in raising money for the latest task.

For example, DeMoranville said, the current USO assignment has forced the pupils to know about the legalities of raising money for a non-profit organization and how certain tax forms must be available for donors.

She said the students also are learning how to connect with the business community. "It's been tremendous," she said.

Communications majors have been taping "The Apprentice" class. Tapes are shown on Northern Illinois' on-campus television system and streamed on the school's Web site.

Network could link suburbs, Fermilab

DAILY HERALD

BY KARI ALLEN

Daily Herald Staff Writer

9-9-04

Imagine a world where doctors can transmit complicated medical test results to physicians in the next town within seconds.

Picture a place where teachers can quickly and easily teleconference with educators from around the globe.

Officials say a new fiber optic

"There are
infinite uses
for something
like this."

Don Carlsen,
Naperville
information
technology director

communications
network
called
NIUNet will
help make
that a reality
for many
area residents.

Northern
Illinois University
officials on
Wednesday

announced plans to create a 175-mile fiber optic loop that will link many towns in the region.

Officials originally planned to simply connect their campuses in DeKalb, Naperville, Hoffman Estates and Rockford into the same high-speed network.

But they thought other entities, such as municipalities, schools, hospitals and research facilities, also might want to tap into it to speed their networks and potentially connect with other high-speed systems worldwide.

The university hopes to partner with cities, including Naperville, to complete the project.

"There are infinite uses for something like this," said Don Carlsen, the city's information technology director, who has been in contact with both Naperville Unit District 203 and Indian Prairie Unit District 204.

The system, for example, would allow the districts to connect with other school systems or agencies such as Fermilab and Argonne National Laboratory, he said.

If Naperville's Edward Hospital links to the system, it could transmit medical information to other area hospitals in seconds, City Manager Peter Burchard said.

Fiber optic cables already exist in Naperville, but NIUNet would allow the city to link with other cities that have high-speed connections, Burchard said.

The NIU network will use existing fiber cable that's already underground along with newly installed cable.

The network, which is expected to take three years to complete, would extend from DeKalb to Batavia to Naperville along the Reagan Memorial Tollway, or I-88. It would connect into Chicago, the I-WIRE network, Argonne National Laboratory and other national research networks through the connection at Fermilab in Batavia.

It then would loop back to Hoffman Estates and west to Rockford, then head south to Rochelle and back to DeKalb.

The university plans to contribute about \$1.5 million toward the project over the next three years. It has applied for grants to help pay for the project and hopes to reduce costs by asking cities along the route to donate right-of-way or easement rights.

NIU officials said the network has the potential to lure more high-tech businesses to the suburbs and allow more residents to telecommute to their jobs.

"This keeps us realizing the full promise of technology," President John Peters said.

Published: September 9, 2004

Business: Economy

City wants to take over dormant fiber-optic ring

▪ Network touted as way to attract business

By ANNA VOELKER, *Rockford Register Star*

ROCKFORD — Rock River Valley business people soon may be able to communicate with companies thousands of miles away without leaving their factory floors or boardrooms.

In an instant, for example, two fastener-makers an ocean apart could analyze shared drawings of a product they're jointly manufacturing. They could see one another in real time on their monitors.

The product that allows them to do this is no thicker than the screws coming off their assembly lines: fiber-optic cable.

Snaking beneath northeast Rockford streets is 22 miles of the cable — actually a bundled collection of several hair-thin glass fiber-optic tubes — that can move thousands of bits of information that make up medical images, design drawings and other applications — almost instantaneously.

"That's the thing that needs to be available to manufacturers with the global market we're involved in," said Judy Pike, owner of Production & Tool Supply Co. in Rockford. "You can talk to the guy in Germany in no time. The bigger companies out there already have this capability. Small businesses need this access to stay competitive."

This fiber-optic ring has been dormant for most of the past decade after telecommunications companies installed it but never brought it online. This inactivity happened across the country, said Jeff Stewart at Trekk Cross-Media, one of several speakers at a news conference Wednesday updating the progress of the fiber-ring initiative.

In fact, Stewart said, 95 percent of all the fiber optics installed in the United States in the 1990s remains unused.

In Rockford, that could change.

Comparing download speeds

Fiber optics are much faster than other types of communication networks, especially when it comes to downloading information. Here's an idea of how long it would take to download a DVD using different types of connections:

* Dial-up modem: 50 hours

* ISDN (integrated services digital network) or digital dial-up: 20 hours

* DSL (digital subscriber lines), a faster, on-all-the-time version of ISDN:

Rockford Mayor Doug Scott and several technology companies said they hope to activate the 22-mile fiber-optic ring, although they provided no timetable as to when that would happen.

The city plans to buy the lease of the fiber-optics network for \$3.5 million from Metropolitan Fiber Solutions, a private firm that tracked down the owners of the fiber ring and negotiated to lease it.

The city would run the system in partnership with cable and phone companies, and Internet providers, among others.

The fiber-optic plan dates back to 2002, when Scott formed a telecommunications task force that later suggested the stagnant fiber network be resuscitated. Since then, eight technology businesses formed Rock River Valley Technology Partners and contributed more than \$1.5 million of their money toward the research, planning and organization of the project. There also are shorter stretches of fiber optics in Rockford from four other companies — McLeodUSA, Insight Communications, Choice One Communications and Ameritech — that eventually could connect to the longer fiber-optic ring, which could eventually be more than 100 miles long, Stewart said.

City and business leaders hope to connect Rockford with other municipalities and universities in the region that already have fiber-optic capabilities. Already, SwedishAmerican Hospital is connected to the network. City Hall and Rockford Memorial Hospital will be the next major organizations to sign on.

Conceivably, the entire region could be linked, noted Ken Wise, the former economic development director in Rochelle, a city that’s been working on its fiber-optic network since 1996.

Wise, who was integral in getting the \$181 million Union Pacific hub to Rochelle, said a healthy fiber-optic network may be even more valuable than the hub in the long run.

“I think this is more important than anything we’ve ever done. Schools, education, businesses, telemedicine right to your bed — it goes on and on,” he said.

And fiber optics have helped Rochelle retain its businesses and attract new ones, Wise said. The same could happen in Rockford.

“Anything that lowers cost and increases productivity is going to help,” said Bob Levin, president of the Rockford Area Council of 100, an economic development group. “It allows us to market that we provide the latest technology.”

Scott said: “It portrays the image that this is the place where your business needs to be. And it’s not just about us. This will help link us to others.”

However, the cost may keep some small businesses from signing up. While fiber optics have higher capacity and much faster speeds compared with other Internet alternatives, these advantages come at a cost: Fiber- optic packages range from \$400 to \$1,500 a month.

At the other end of the spectrum is a simple dial-up connection over phone lines. That costs on average about \$20 a month. A digital subscriber line, faster than a dial-up but also working over a phone line, is about \$80 a month. A T1 line carries much more data than the dial-up models. This can cost businesses

- Three hours
 - * Cable modem: One hour
 - * Fiber optics: Four seconds
- Source: Rock River Valley Technology Partners



Gary L. Carlson/Register Star
Rockford Mayor Doug Scott talks about progress on the Rocknet fiber-optic loop during a news conference Wednesday at City Hall.

anywhere from \$600 to \$900.

The fiber-optics option is not cost-effective — at least for now — for people such as Pete Gustafson, a partner at Rockford I.D. Shop. He can access a Web-based program that allows him to do business through a Rock Valley College program. That cost him \$150 for the license and \$50 every year he uses the service.

“The quote that was put in front of me is pretty pricey compared to other options I have,” Gustafson said. “It certainly is a lot faster, and it’s a benefit that I may have to take advantage of in the future. Right now, I can do business effectively even though it’s slower.”

Contact: avoelker@registerstartower.com; 815-987-1346

Information

To learn more about getting your business connected to the fiber-optic network, call Tammy Eighmy at 877-443-8462.

NIUNet

Northern Illinois University plans to create a fiber-optic communications network that would connect the school’s main campus in DeKalb with its three satellite locations in Naperville, Hoffman Estates and Rockford.

NIUNet, a three-year project, is a 175-mile fiber-optic loop that eventually would link to municipalities, schools, hospitals and research facilities.

The university expects to invest \$1.5 million over the next three years to complete the NIUNet ring. The completed network will consist of both constructed segments and long stretches of leased fiber cable currently lying unused underground.

NIU plans to reduce costs by establishing agreements with a number of cities along the route who would donate right-of-way or easement rights. The university also has applied for state funds and grant money to help pay for some of the project.

Development of the first phase is already under way and includes links from NIU’s main campus in DeKalb to its Naperville campus and the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia.

Source: Northern Illinois University

Published: September 9, 2004

Business: Economy

Fiber optics Q&A

QUESTION: What is fiber optics?

ANSWER: Fiber optics describes technology that uses glass threads to transmit data. A fiber-optic cable consists of a bundle of threads, each capable of transmitting light signals that carry information. Because light travels in straight lines, optical fibers reflect the light and allow it to travel long distances quickly.

Q: What are the advantages of fiber optics over traditional copper lines?

A: Fiber-optic cables have a much greater bandwidth than metal cables. This means that they can carry more data. Fiber-optic cables are also less susceptible than metal cables to interference. Also, fibers have more than 10,000 times the data capacity of copper. That's why they are used in applications involving huge amounts of data, such as detailed medical drawings and video conferencing.

Q: Regarding Rockford's fiber-optic network, why is the city teaming with private businesses to get this done?

A: Rockford has a fiber ring that's not being used. Companies in the 1990s invested billions of dollars in building this fiber infrastructure but failed to bring the networks to the users who were not directly located on the ring. The private companies can get the network going as the city looks for funding to buy the ring.

Q: How much is this going to cost the city of Rockford?

A: Estimates range from \$3 million to \$3.5 million. City officials expect to pay for the network by selling bonds.

Q: What is Rock River Valley Technology Partners?

A: This group is a coalition of local business owners in the Rock River Valley who studied the need for a fiber network in the region. The group is comprised of Global Enterprise Technologies, Entre Computer Solutions, Trekk Cross-Media Communications, Kelso-Burnett Co., Crescent Electric, Lexxon Networks, Ticomix and Montel Technologies.

Q: So what's next?

A: The plan is to spread the fiber-optics system throughout the Rock River Valley

with Rockford as the hub.

Sources: *Webopedia.com*, *Howstuffworks.com*, Rock River Valley Technology Partners and the city of Rockford

Initially, making practice squad a start

Fleck, Luke sign with 49ers, Seahawks

Aurora Beacon News
9-8-04

By [Rick Armstrong](#) STAFF WRITER

If it's true you have to walk before you can run, then P.J. Fleck and R.J. Luke have jumped off the treadmill and are making like those Olympic speed walkers. Now, it's full speed ahead.

Both former area high school standouts were cut on Sunday then signed to the practice squads of National Football League teams on Monday. No small feat since both went to training camp as undrafted free agents.

Fleck, a wide receiver from Kaneland and Northern Illinois University, was signed by the San Francisco 49ers. Luke, a fullback who played for his father R.J. at Waubonsie Valley before Penn State and then Western Illinois, was signed by the Seattle Seahawks.

"My goal coming in here was any way, shape or form, to make the team," a relieved Fleck said Tuesday. "Whether it's practice squad, active roster, anything. Just be here. Be here when the final cuts are done. And I am."

It's especially gratifying since he came into coach Dennis Erickson's camp "14th out of 14 wide receivers. Somehow, I'm in the top seven. My next goal is to be activated and play in a regular season game. Take it goal by goal, day by day and see what happens."

San Francisco kept six wide receivers on its 53-man active roster, including former University of Illinois standout Brandon Lloyd and former Bear, 11-year veteran Curtis Conway. Fleck is the lone wideout on the team's eight-man practice squad.

Seattle coach Mike Holmgren kept two fullbacks, Mack Strong and Heath Evans on his active roster, and had to place Chris Davis on the injured list

Ahead of Fleck

San Francisco wide receivers who made the active roster ahead of NIU's P.J. Fleck:

Player, school Age Ht. Wt. NFL exp.

Arnaz Battle (Notre Dame) 24 6-1 217 2 years

Curtis Conway (USC) 33 6-1 196 11 years

Derrick Hamilton (Clemson) 22 6-4 203 R (3rd round)

Brandon Lloyd (Illinois) 23 6-0 184 2 years

Cedrick Wilson (Tennessee) 25 5-10 179 3

Rashaun Woods (Okla. State) 23 6-2 205 R (1st round)

Pro Football

after he suffered a right knee injury Friday in the team's final preseason game. The former Syracuse player missed most of last season after having surgery on his left knee.

"I told them, 'This is the best practice squad I've had,'" Holmgren told the (ital) Seattle Post Intelligencer (end ital), "because if we got injuries in the season, I could go to the practice squad and fill that (spot) pretty nicely. I haven't always been able to say that.

"They're more than just practice players. These guys are good players who might be a year away or a year young." Practice squads were expanded from five to eight players this season and reportedly average earnings of \$4,500 per week.

"They can activate you at any time," said Fleck. "Basically, you're paid to practice. They just don't pay you as much (as the active players). They don't have to give you the (league) minimum, but it's enough for me to get by, I'll tell you that." Fleck wasn't surprised to be cut on Sunday. In fact, Erickson had told him and another rookie they might be cut before Thursday's final preseason game against San Diego, which featured fifth round draft choice and former teammate Michael Turner. The tailback, who rushed 24 times for 116 yards and scored on a 2-yard run, also caught two passes for 24 yards against the 49ers and will back up LaDanian Tomlinson. He is the lone Huskie from last year's team to make an active roster. Safety Akil Grant (Tennessee) and cornerback Randee Drew (San Francisco) were cut earlier.

Former NIU quarterback Chris Finlen was cut by the New York Jets.

Fleck had one catch for 17 yards, returned a punt 13 yards and made a special teams tackle in the game.

"I thought I had a good game," he said. "It was enough to keep me here I guess." Fleck apparently caught the attention of more than the coaching staff during his training camp run. The day before Fleck was cut, San Francisco 49er beat writer Kevin Lynch, detailed the camp and termed the former Huskie it's MVP:

"He was there every day, he arrived in tremendous shape and he didn't mind getting leveled by safety Ronnie Heard," wrote Lynch. "He is P.J. Fleck, a surprising 5-foot-10-inch package of boundless energy. Fleck, a rookie wide receiver from Northern Illinois, took several hard hits in the exhibitions and practice, but continued to do his Energizer Bunny routine. Even when he was mowed down by Heard (defenders aren't supposed to hit receivers in practice), Fleck bounced up and trotted back to the huddle. He also put forth consistent effort and made improvements on the special teams. Nevertheless, with the team stacked at wide receiver, Fleck will go on the practice squad at best." The 49er receiving corps includes first- and third-round draft choices Rashaun Woods and Derrick Hamilton, respectively.

Fleck, the 5-9, 191-pounder, apparently also hit it off well with his teammates.

Lynch also wrote about the camp: "Best moment: Big defensive tackle Michael Landry asking Fleck if he was part of a youth group that was milling in the team's hotel lobby (before the preseason opener). Fleck responded by saying he was a 49er and eventually told Landry that he wore No. 10. According to Fleck, Landry responded by saying, "Oh, my God, is that you?"

Fleck and Luke may not be NFL "knowns" yet, but their odds are getting better.

09/08/04

Quick Shots



Matt Trowbridge

(College sports)

Time goes against NIU

NIU's bid for a third Top-25 upset — and perhaps a return to the national rankings — ended in curious fashion Saturday. The Huskies threw a 4-yard pass with 31 seconds left — leaving them a 50-yard field goal away from overtime at Maryland. But when the Huskies, who were out of timeouts, raced back to the line, the referee stood over the ball and refused to let NIU snap it.

Coach Joe Novak figured NIU had time to throw two more passes and, if those didn't pay off in a touchdown, kick a field goal. Instead, 23 seconds ran off the clock and NIU threw one short incomplete pass and the game was over.

"We didn't know what was going on," receiver Dan Sheldon said. "We get lined up and all of a sudden the other team is charging the field. It didn't feel like the game was over. That's the toughest part; it doesn't feel like it came to a complete end."

The game was officiated by a Mid-American Conference crew and NIU sent a tape to the MAC office for review. But the Huskies have downplayed the incident.

"I'm not trying to make a big deal out of it," Novak said. "I'd like to forget about it."