For Immediate Release/12-19-11/Ashley Johnson

National Grant Expands A&M-Commerce Network Capabilities

Commerce, TEXAS (Nov. 21, 2011)—Texas A&M University-Commerce announced Monday that students, faculty and staff will now enjoy high-speed broadband access thanks to a $6.6 million Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant awarded to The Texas A&M University System.

This award, along with $3 million in matching contributions, will allow the A&M System to provide high-speed broadband access to all 11 A&M System universities, the Texas A&M Health Science Center, and communities served by the A&M System.

Prior to receiving the grant funding, the university’s high-speed Internet was limited to about 120 Megabits of usable bandwidth, and was also shared with A&M-Commerce residence halls. According to Anwar Karim, vice president and chief information officer for A&M-Commerce, the new setup provides administrative and academic networks with a dedicated 125Mbs of Internet bandwidth separate from the residence halls that can be increased as the university’s needs increase. Not only will this benefit the flow of information across campus, Karim said, it will greatly improve students’ ability to experience smoother and faster delivery of Internet applications and media.

In the near future, A&M-Commerce also hopes to extend the higher speed network to the university’s remote campuses in Mesquite, Dallas, Midlothian, and Corsicana.

According to Karim, the year-long journey toward infrastructure improvement began a year ago, and would not be possible without the help of TAMU Telecommunications, TTVN Wide Area Network, A&M-Commerce IT, and Peoples Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

“This initiative once again demonstrates Texas A&M University and the A&M System’s desire to be a leader in collaborative networking,” said Dr. Pierce Cantrell, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer.

Funding also is provided for next generation Internet-based radio gateways that allow campus police departments to communicate with local DPS radio systems over the broadband network. DPS will be making its public safety databases (including wants and warrants) over a shared link, eliminating the need for costly satellite-based communication links.
According to Cantrell, “This grant was only made possible through a public and private partnership that embraces the spirit of the BTOP grants.”

The required 30 percent grant match was shared by all of the partners that will benefit from the grant.

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**About the BTOP grant:** The grant is funded entirely by the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA), and is dedicated to funding comprehensive broadband infrastructure projects, public computer centers, and sustainable broadband adoption projects. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act provided a total of $7.2 billion for the NTIA and the Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to expand access to and adoption of broadband services in communities across the U.S.

In Texas, The Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) will bring state-of-the-art communications capacities to underserved schools and other community-serving institutions. The project predicts that the network will serve 114,000 students and 27,000 faculty and staff, as well as connect the university police departments to the State of Texas Department of Public Safety to enhance security and safety within these communities and help enable the Next Generation 911 network.