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Louisiana Optical Network Initiative Names Donald Vandal Executive Director

BATON ROUGE – Donald Vandal, previously deputy commissioner for Finance and Administration at the Louisiana Board of Regents, is the new executive director of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative, or LONI.

In this role, Vandal, whose prior work experience includes financial and administrative duties with the Board of Regents, the University of Louisiana System and the Louisiana Legislature, will lead and coordinate LONI activities statewide.

"I am honored to have this opportunity to work directly with LONI, which is a crucial part of our state's efforts to establish a technology-based infrastructure that positions us favorably for future research and economic development initiatives," Vandal said.

LONI, administered under the authority of the Louisiana Board of Regents, is a high-speed, fiber optic network that connects supercomputing resources among six universities – LSU, Southern University, University of Louisiana-Lafayette, Louisiana Tech University, University of New Orleans and Tulane University, along with the two LSU health sciences centers in New Orleans and Shreveport.

LONI connects Louisiana to major national research networks, including Internet2, and is one of 11 resource providers on TeraGrid, the backbone of national cyberinfrastructure. Four Mississippi universities – Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi and University of Southern Mississippi – are also LONI customers. These universities use the LONI network resources to conduct research at these sites and to connect with also national networks.

"Mr. Vandal has a wealth of experience working with various state agencies that focus on higher education, and we are pleased to have someone with his qualifications in this role as we continue our work to establish Louisiana as a leader in applying high-performance networking and computing technology to both education and industry," said Les Guice, LONI Management Council Chairman.

Vandal replaces previous LONI Executive Director Charles McMahon, who became Chief Technology Officer for Tulane University in early 2009. LSU Professor Joel Tohline served as interim LONI executive director while the LONI Management Council conducted a search for an executive director to replace McMahon.

In addition to overseeing all administrative tasks for LONI, Vandal will work with the universities that contribute high-performance computing resources to the network to establish inter-university partnerships and research collaborations.

"I am extremely pleased that Donnie is assuming this key leadership position and I am looking forward to working closely with him as part of the unique relationship LSU has with LONI," said Brian Voss, LSU's Chief Information Officer and Vice Chancellor for Information Technology. "Donnie brings remarkable business acumen and perspective to the role, which I believe will be crucial to the next phase of LONI's evolution."

"LONI is an integral part of LSU research efforts involving advanced computational science and high-performance computing, and we believe Donald Vandal's understanding of how to work with different groups statewide will help us more effectively connect computational resources across campuses, providing more opportunities for faculty, staff and students to gain experience working in multi-institution research teams," said Stephen David Beck, interim director of the LSU Center for Computation & Technology.

More information about LONI is available at http://www.loni.org.

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