PRESS RELEASE

Sakai Foundation Announces
Teaching and Learning Innovation Competition

** For Release Immediately Upon Receipt **

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November 5, 2009

Denver, Colorado – The Sakai Foundation is seeking nominees for its third annual International "Teaching with Sakai Innovation" Award. Representatives from the Foundation announced next year's competition at the EDUCAUSE Conference in Denver CO today. The intent of the award is to highlight examples of innovative and transformative educational applications of Sakai.

The third annual Teaching With Sakai Innovation Award (TWSIA) will continue to build on the energy generated at the 10th International Sakai Conference in Boston MA, where last year's first and second place winners, Dr. Andrea Crampton, Charles Sturt University School Biomedical Sciences, Australia and Dr. Edith Sheffer, History Department Stanford University excited attendees with examples of how Sakai enhanced the educational experience of their students.

The Sakai Project is a landmark venture creating open-source course management, collaboration, and online research support tools for the higher education community. Begun through a collaboration involving the University of Michigan, Indiana University, MIT, and Stanford University, it now includes over 200 universities, colleges, and institutions of learning around the world.

At the heart of Sakai, whose community-source mantra is "built by educators, for educators," is a deep passion for teaching, learning, and innovation. Thanks to sponsorship by Wiley (www.wiley.com) with additional support from rSmart (www.rsmart.com), both Sakai Commercial Affiliates, this passion will continue to grow with the third annual Teaching With Sakai Innovation Award.

"Encouraging the sharing of best teaching practices and supporting the collaborative efforts on openedpractices.org are priorities for rSmart", said Mike Zackrison, rSmart VP of Marketing and Strategy. "Our company is excited to continue sponsorship of this important award on behalf of the community. It is important to include teaching practitioners in meaningful collaboration around Sakai. The Teaching With Sakai Innovation Award is an important tool in fostering this collaboration. Thanks to all those who volunteer to make the award happen, the winner-presentations are a highlight of the conference each year."

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Applications for the 2010 TWSIA will be accepted starting in February 2010. Instructors or other interested parties can visit www.OpenEdpractices.org to learn more about the award and access an online application form and evaluation rubric. Additional information will be posted on the website in December 2009. Winners will be awarded a trip to Denver, Colorado, to present at the 11th Sakai Conference and receive their award during the conference.

Entries also seed a collection of innovative practices in the OpenEdpractices.org repository, a community of practice for teaching and learning with open/community-source tools supported in part by rSmart and the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

"Community or open-source developed learning environments are not constrained by the limits of a profit-margin," says Josh Baron, Chair of the Sakai Foundation Board and director of academic technology and eLearning at Marist College. "Proprietary vendors often opt to deploy 'status quo' technology that sells instead of promoting truly innovative instructional technologies that can transform the learning process. The Teaching with Sakai Innovation Award and 'OpenEd Practices' repository will allow us to capture and share these educationally transformative applications of Sakai with all levels of education."

Last year's entries and winners showed that instructors worldwide are using Sakai in exciting and innovative ways. Susan Roig, co-chair for the Award Committee and director of academic technology, SunGard Higher Education at Claremont Graduate University said, "The excitement generated by those applications of Sakai encouraged additional community effort in the planning for this year's award with technology leaders from many institutions again coming together to make this all happen."

The judges were enthusiastic about the winning courses. Of particular note was Dr. Crampton's use of Sakai Project Sites which facilitated a constructivist approach to the teaching and learning process by allowing each group of students to collaborate on a series of "crime scene scenarios" in which each student played a particular role (e.g., "first on scene officer," "scene of crime officer," etc.).

Similarly, judges were impressed with Dr. Sheffer's creative use of the Sakai Wiki tool as a means for students to develop their own historical characters in the context of real historical events. In both cases Sakai was a catalyst for a shift away from passive teacher-centered learning towards a more active student-centered pedagogical approach to the courses.

"Sakai is a magical tool box for the modern educator," Dr. Crampton said. "Whether you use one tool or ten, the only barrier to effectively teaching today's students is your imagination. Further, the Sakai community and TWSIA break down institutional and geographical boundaries, which enables those interested in applying sound pedagogy to their courses to collaborate and share experiences. Where else would you find an educator from a rural Australian university with kangaroos for traffic hazards sharing the stage and ideas with academics from universities in the US, UK, South Africa and elsewhere in the global village? The receipt of this award has been a

very humbling experience and represents not just my efforts but those of the team that introduced Sakai to Charles Sturt University."

Second place winner Dr. Sheffer shared that "Sakai's exciting technology platform is truly changing the way we teach. In my class, the Wiki tool enabled students to individualize, experience, and share history in a way that would have been unimaginable without it. I am grateful for this innovative resource and look forward to developing other Sakai projects at Stanford."

About Sakai

The Sakai Community develops and distributes the open-source Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment, an enterprise-ready collaboration and courseware management platform that provides users with a suite of learning, portfolio, library and project tools. Sakai collaborators - ranging from educators to engineers - share in their successes and challenges, honing the community's collective expertise to drive rapid development of this enterprise-ready platform. Sakai is distributed as free and open source software under the Educational Community License.

Sakai is an open source software project driven by the Sakai Foundation, a worldwide consortium of institutions, organizations, and individuals dedicated to providing collaboration, research, and e-portfolio tools. The Sakai Foundation is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to coordinating activities around Sakai and the Sakai community to insure Sakai's long-term viability. For more information, please visit www.sakaiproject.org.

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