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IT will be focus of academic gathering

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More than 900 people from all over the world are expected to be at the Qwest Center Omaha Thursday through Sunday for an academic conference on information technology.

Computer security and privacy, business models for a digital economy and organizing projects in a virtual world of e-mail and videoconferencing will be among topics to be discussed, said Deepak Khazanchi and Ilze Zigurs, two professors at the University of Nebraska at Omaha who helped organize the conference.

University researchers and some businesspeople from across the United States, as well as from countries including Mexico, Germany, Canada, Brazil and Singapore, are expected at the 2005 Americas Conference on Information Systems, the professors said.

About 450 peer-reviewed research papers will be presented, and the days will be packed with panels, workshops and tutorials

Linda Sanford, a senior vice president at IBM, will deliver a keynote speech Friday on business growth and innovation. Computer security will be addressed Saturday by Roger Schell, co-founder and president of California-based Aesec Corp.

One key to corporate growth in a global economy will be partnerships that cut across industries, national borders and cultural differences, Sanford said Tuesday from Somers, N.Y., as she previewed her talk.

"It is technology that will enable the growth to happen," Sanford said. For example, standardizing computer applications makes business collaboration more seamless and less expensive, Sanford said.

Companies also could do more to save money by concentrating on their specialties and contracting out for other services, such as maintaining retirement accounts for their employees, Sanford said.

The Association for Information Systems, an organization for academics specializing in high-technology issues, is holding the conference, which has been held in past years in cities such as Long Beach, Calif.; Boston; Dallas; Tampa, Fla.; New York; and Acapulco, Mexico.

This year's conference was awarded to Omaha in 2002, after a year's effort spearheaded by Khazanchi and Zigurs.

Sponsors include the University of Nebraska's Peter Kiewit Institute, Union Pacific Corp., Mutual of Omaha, First National Bank of Omaha, the Greater Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau and the AIM Institute.

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