UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB ECOLOGY CENTER TO RECEIVE GRANT

The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) at the University of California, Santa Barbara will receive approximately $3 million as part of a $12.25 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to improve computing and access to information technology, according to an announcement by the NSF today.

Called "SEEK" for Science Environment for Ecological Knowledge, the information technology framework and infrastructure will derive and extend ecological knowledge by facilitating the discovery, access, integration, interpretation and analyses of distributed ecological information.

The project includes a multidisciplinary team of computer scientists, ecologists and technologists from the Partnership for Biodiversity Informatics (PBI), which is a consortium comprised of NCEAS, the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC), the University of Kansas (KU), the University of New Mexico (UNM), and several partnering institutions -- Arizona State University, the University of North Carolina, the University of Vermont, and Napier University in Scotland.

According to PBI, this five-year initiative will lead to fundamental improvements in how researchers can gain global access to data and information, rapidly locate and utilize distributed computational services, and exercise powerful new methods for capturing, reproducing and extending the analysis process itself.

Scientists at NCEAS, which brings together working groups to collaborate on ecological problems including climate change and species extinction, often find that they must call all over the world to get relevant data sets for the problems they address. "Often they can locate only ten to 20 relevant data sets, but hundreds to thousands are out there," says Matt Jones, co-principal investigator from NCEAS on the new grant. The grant will help in locating data relevant to specific problems and make it easier to obtain.

The PBI summary notes that a multi-faceted approach will be used to ensure that the research products, software, and information technology infrastructure that result from SEEK will optimally benefit science, education, and the public. This includes, according to PBI, "community involvement, a World Wide Web portal, informatics training, and an innovative annual symposium and training program that focuses on information technology transfer to young investigators and students, particularly those from underrepresented groups."

Related Links

NCEAS Web Site

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