By Razvan Stoica, Hardware Editor

China Universities Join Sun's SPARC Partnership Program

The three-year agreement will improve the education in chip design

Server manufacturer Sun Microsystems signed an educational, three-year partnership with the Chinese Ministry of Education. The new agreement aims at improving the quality of education in chip design using Sun's technology included in the Sparc processors. The agreement stipulates that at least 100 professors will have to attend Sun's trainings in processor architecture. Also, the Ministry of Education will establish a currently unknown number of Sun centers of excellence. "This is an opportunity to spread our architecture in a big way in a huge emerging market, and it's a key endorsement of Sparc that will generate some interesting innovations," said Fadi Azhari, director of marketing for Sun's multi-threaded processors. "The key thrust of this program is a realization that the students of today and the programmers of tomorrow. We want to have more hands and brains working on our technology," he added. The new deal is part of a wider initiative started by Sun. The company has signed partnerships with US-based universities, and established six academic design centers based on the Sparc architecture. The main idea behind the initiative is training as many engineers as possible in the internal workings of the chip, in order to give them the possibility to write code tailored for the Sparc processor.Moreover, the company has recently **open-sourced its Sparc T2 processor** (also known as Niagara 2), as part of the OpenSPARC open-source project. Sun published the chip's register-transfer level software of its multi-threaded Niagara processors more than two years ago. The code can be used to create clone processors, as long as the modifications are openly shared."We appreciate Sun's open source strategy, especially Sun's outstanding contribution in the open-sourced IC area, and we encourage the active cooperation effort between China's universities and Sun in teaching and research area," said Zhao Qinping, a vice minister of the Ministry of Education. "We believe the cooperation will be beneficial in advancing China's teaching and research level in IC area," he added.

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