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Michael Golden
Microsoft

Microsoft Partners with UNESCO for Higher Education ICT Task Force

Catalyzing improvements for higher education

Microsoft has partnered with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in an effort designed to identify the opportunities offered by Information and Communication Technology for governments to drive change. In this regard, the duo announced the UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). According to the Redmond company, the task force will be responsible for putting together a strategic plan tailored to higher education institutions across the globe to prepare students for the growing challenge associated with economic stimulus efforts but also for the workforce needs of 21st century companies.

"We believe that technology has a vital role to play in building up 21st-century skills, broadening access to education and personalizing the learning experience to adapt teaching to the unique needs of each learner," commented Michael Golden, corporate vice president, Education Products Group at Microsoft. "This program makes technology resources more accessible than ever before to governments and students across the world. We will continue to support UNESCO and our newly formed UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and ICT in every way we can."

The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education acted as the stage where Microsoft and UNESCO announced the creation of the task force. The focus of the initiative is to drive the evolution of ICT in post-secondary teaching, but also in learning efforts and research initiatives. In this sense, the task force will analyze conclusions presented by the WCHE as well as feedback from organizations involved in education worldwide.

"Higher education is increasingly strategic for building up skilled work forces in countries. Our focus has been on ensuring that tertiary institutions address the key long-term requirements of our increasingly knowledge-based societies and that students today are best equipped to drive and support economic growth and to address major development challenges from education to health to the environment," added Nicholas Burnett, UNESCO assistant director-general for education. "Through the creation of the UNESCO-Microsoft Task Force on Higher Education and ICT we will help mobilize critical strategic resources to better assist ministries of education worldwide."

In addition, Microsoft explained that the task force as well as its own Education Alliance would serve as sources or resource packages designed to catalyze improvements for short-term higher education.