COMMUNITY TELEGRAPH-NORTH BELFAST

PAGE: 11

UNI4 DATE: Wednesday 18th January 2006

2

Size/Val:

Rating:

Subject:

UU team to take part in EU project

By MATTHEW MCCREARY
mmccreary@belfasttelegraph.co.uk

THE University of Ulster has won a competitive bid to take part in an EU-funded research project to develop the next generation of computer networks which can 'think' for themselves.

The three year project has a 5m euro (£3.36m) budget and involves 14 partners from throughout Europe.

The university's team includes Maurice Mulvenna and Dr Chris Nugent, senior lecturers in Computer Science in the School of Computing and Mathematics at the Jordanstown campus, who will contribute their expertise in next-generation networking and artificial intelligence systems.

Mr Mulvenna said: "Computers are a common feature of our everyday life and are becoming more and more complex.

"But their complexity implies more and more human intervention is needed to configure them and to make sure that they work properly.

"Essentially the aim of the project is to develop networks that can — to an extent — think for themselves. Ideally the systems could run themselves better with little human influence. Of course, this is of great interest to businesses as it offers lower cost services in computing and networks.

"The potential of networks that can think for themselves is tremendous and could include cheaper and more effective monitoring in their own homes for the elderly and people with disabilities. Currently homes can be fitted with sensors on fittings or doors to monitor the activities of residents, but the sensor responses have to be physically monitored constantly.

"A self-managing network of sensors could flag up problems when they occur without constant monitoring. That would enable healthcare organisations to offer more focused care, more cheaply and more effectively.

"The University of Ulster is already involved in 'smart homes' research and this new research project will complement that work."

The project is funded by the prestigious Future & Emerging Technologies (FET) section of the European Commission's Information Society Technology (IST) body, part of the EU Framework Programme for Research and Development.