
HIGHERGATE

THE GATEWAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
WORLDWIDE

PROJECT FOR A SPECIALIZED INTERNET PORTAL

SHORT PRESENTATION

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12 JUNE 2001

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Why a Portal?

Strong growth and diversification of the sector

The world of higher education and research is in a process of rapid and deep change, resulting in strong growth and diversification. The main characteristics are:

- A strong growth in the number of participants, due to an ever increasing participation rate (massification),
- The growing demand for lifelong learning,
- The increasing importance of knowledge as a mean of production,
- The fact that knowledge and education have become a key competitive factor for nations, in addition to being crucial for the transmission of cultural heritage and for social cohesion.

Need for rapid access to reliable information

The need for rapid access to reliable information regarding the specific and numerous aspects of higher education and research is growing rapidly. There are two totally different groups that have choices to make and therefore have a great need for comprehensive and up-to-date information:

- **The stakeholders:** students, researchers, faculty, department heads, university leaders, members of boards, external auditors, etc.,
- **The outside world:** the State authorities, the business community and the general public, who, for a great number of different reasons, in their own interest or simply by curiosity, need specific or general information concerning the sector or its output.

Decision making: How to find the information?

A lot of this information is available on paper, but it is completely disseminated and very hard to compile. Decision making is therefore very difficult. Moreover, most of the information is now available on the Internet, because most institutions and persons involved in higher education and research are keen on providing information related to their activities on a website. However, the fact that the information accessible through the Internet is doubling every one or two months, coupled with the lack of a systematic approach makes it as difficult as before to find what one is looking for.

Existing web sites are either far too general or too specific

An analysis of the well-known general Internet portals like *Yahoo*, *AltaVista*, *Netscape* or *Lycos* shows fairly clearly that they are not of great use when one needs precise and precompiled information, because they try to cover everything. There are a few websites dedicated to higher education and research, but they are of limited use, as they cover only one specific aspect or are restricted to a very specific region or country.

This description of the present situation shows quite clearly that **there is an urgent and immense need for an Internet portal dedicated to all aspects of higher education and research worldwide** and that this need will become every year, even every month, increasingly significant.

What do we want to achieve?

Our project aims precisely at developing the portal – or gateway - which would allow all those inside or outside of the sector looking for general or specific information to use “HigherGate” to locate it. **“HigherGate” aims, therefore, to become the number one gateway to access the wealth of information spread all over the world about higher education and research.**

The graphic below shows the great variety of relevant information that could be covered by “HigherGate”. The annex on page 5 describes it in more details.

The screenshot displays the HigherGate website interface. At the top, the logo 'HigherGate' is followed by the tagline 'Your Gate to Higher Education and Research' and a language selection menu with options: [en] [fr] [de] [es].

The main content area is organized into several sections:

- Organisations:** Universities, Colleges, Research centers, Libraries, ...
- Degrees:** Programs anywhere, Life long learning
- Financial:** Grant and loans, Support for teaching and research
- Jobs & Expertise:** Academic Positions open
- Distance Learning:** E-Courseware, Full online study
- Publications:** Books, Journals, Publishers, non-Published literature
- e-Trade:** Second hand equipment and books
- Resources:** Online Classes, Courses and other useful resources

On the right side, there are three interactive buttons:

- Want to study abroad? Find How!**
- Want to study Music in English? Find where**
- Need a loan? Find it here**

Below these buttons is a search section titled 'Search for an online course' with a search input field and a search button. Below the search field is a snippet of Latin text: 'et sapientiae tuae non est et laudare te vult homo, aliqua porro creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccab'.

At the bottom, there is a section titled 'What Science has to say - latest news from the front' with a sub-heading 'A Sharper View of the Stars' and a brief text: 'A new generation of optical interferometers is letting astronomers study stars in 100 times finer detail than is possible with the Hubble Space Telescope.'

At the very bottom of the screenshot, it says 'Confidential Working Document - (c) Copyright 2001 L+N Weber'.

How can it be achieved?

Realization in steps

Step by step

The portal will be realized in steps according to the financial means available. However, to guarantee that the portal stands out as THE gateway to higher education and research, it is necessary to create rapidly 4-5 fairly completes modules. We shall also explore all possibilities of cooperation and partnership with existing web portals. This portal would stand as a content aggregator from different sources.

A link on every university home page, worldwide

Competitive Advantage

It is extremely important to realize that many worldwide or regional university organizations are very much interested in the project and, hence, very keen on collaborating. First among others, the International Association of Universities (IAU), which has been publishing for 50 years well-known handbooks of universities and degrees, considers it part of its mission to contribute to the realization of this portal. The United Nations University is presently financing the realization of a prototype of the portal. Other leading organizations like the International Association of

University Presidents (IAUP) and the American Council on Education (ACE) have also expressed their strong interest. And others will follow.

The direct promotion to member universities of these different associations will provide HigherGate with an excellent competitive advantage – one only needs to imagine a link on the home page of every university in the world.

Cost and source of financing

We estimate that an inflow of 2 millions US dollars per year during 3 years (6 million US dollars over 3 years) is necessary. We consider that most modules will produce revenues and should become economically independent after 2-3 years thanks to the sale of services or sponsoring, as they would become excellent marketing tools. This would, in particular, be the case for modules like jobs and expertise, publications or second-hand equipment. The sector itself will be invited to participate financially. By having the exploitation of the first modules financially viable, the realization of additional modules should be easier to finance.

Creation of a legal entity

Although it is mainly serving a public need, the realization of the project would take the form of a small corporation, which would employ a few Internet and communication specialists, as well as content specialists knowing the sector particularly well. The initiators of the project will create the company in association with a few partners and sponsors. These could be associations active in higher education and research for the network potential that they can bring, as well as foundations, philanthropists, governmental organizations as well as partners from the private sector. Later on, when the portal will be generating revenues, investors could well be interested in its further development. We might consider also creating a foundation to secure the necessary founding of the project and to associate the stakeholders.

Next Steps

Finalization of the project

We are presently in the process of finalizing the project. This includes the following steps:

- Developing a prototype of the portal,
- Running a market analysis to better identify the sources of income,
- Finalizing the business model and elaborating a business plan,
- Securing the collaboration of the leading university associations,
- Creating the legal entities.

Call for sponsors

We are also searching for sponsors or investors, first of all to finance the finalization of the project and, more importantly, to get the necessary capital to develop the first 4-5 modules.

This is a unique opportunity for a foundation, organisation or enterprise to demonstrate its commitment to developing a society based on improved learning opportunities by supporting HigherGate.

It is only if your organization contributes to the realization of this project that it will be possible for Highergate to respond to the urgent and immense need for information on the higher education and research sector. Can we count on your interest and support?

The main architects of the project:

Luc E. Weber is professor of public economics at the University of Geneva. He served for nine years as Vice-rector and then Rector of the University of Geneva. He was also Chairman of the Swiss Rectors Conference and then its delegate for international affairs. He serves now as Vice-president of the International Association of Universities (IAU) and member of the board of the European University Association (EUA). He is also the co-founder of the Glion colloquium, a think tank focused on higher education policy and university management.

Nicolas X. Weber studied at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and at the University of Geneva, from which he received a master's degree in computer science and business economics. Upon graduation, he specialized in the conception of Internet strategies and the development of Internet tools for many firms. He is the main designer of several Internet portals, including those of the World Economic Forum in Geneva, Symplon AG in Munich and the modeling agency Seven in Geneva.

Ideas for modules

Informative	Commercial
1. Institutions and organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homepages of HE&R institutions, research centres, scientific libraries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, learned societies, networks, ... - Wordlist of universities 	7. Distance learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-courseware - E-full study programs (content) - Virtual universities
2. Programs and degrees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs and/or degrees by discipline, region and language - Lifelong learning programs 	8. Jobs and brains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-market for academic positions in teaching and research (situation vacant and looked for) by discipline and region
3. Financial resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governmental and non governmental programs, as well as foundations and other organizations supporting teaching and research - Grant and loans for students 	9. E-trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-market for new and second hand scientific equipment - E-market for used books and journals
4. Policies and analyses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International, national and regional policies for HE&R - Scholarly analyses of the HE&R sector as well as of the governance or institutions 	10. Publishers and publications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homepages of books and journals publishers, as well as of electronic publications - Access to non-published contributions (i.e., department or institute working papers, publication at author's account)
5. News <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily news from the HE&R sector 	
6. What Science has to say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links to Internet sites providing information on research results to a larger audience 	

