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ULM releases "FlightPath" for universities "from Kansas to Kenya"

FlightPath, the University of Louisiana at Monroe's online advising system is now available to be downloaded and used by "universities from Kansas to Kenya," as remarked by its lead programmer, ULM Web Application Programmer, Richard Peacock.

FlightPath is used to advise students of course offerings and degree requirements. Students may also check grades, find course descriptions, track their current courses, and see how their credits would fit into another major.

With FlightPath now being offered as an "open source," anyone in the world may install and adjust the program for their needs.

Peacock said, "The license under which FlightPath is released is known as a 'GNU General Public License.' It means that anyone can download and even modify FlightPath, but the code must remain open source.

Users cannot sell FlightPath's source code to anyone else and the source code must always remain free and open."

"The open source software movement aligns perfectly with any university's goal to advance the cause of education," he continued.

"When code is open source, anyone is legally permitted to investigate the code, learn from it, and improve it if they wish."

The ULM Computing Center staff is well aware of the impact of this move as it has sparked collaboration with developers from other universities, adding something new and beneficial to the body of freely-available software.

"We are in the business of providing high quality education," said Senior Web Developer, Brian Taylor.

"Developing and sharing software as open source is a great example of our commitment to making the most of our limited resources by sharing and working together."

Peacock says the open source movement is important because it levels the playing field. It allows universities in developing nations to have the same access to the software tools needed to organize, learn, and advance. According to Peacock, similar software can cost over six figures to license.

"ULM currently takes advantage of lots of open source products, including Moodle, Linux, MySQL, and Zimbra, so we know how valuable it is to give back to the community," he said.

Although anyone can download FlightPath's source code, this development is particularly beneficial by allowing current students in technology fields to download FlightPath's code to see how it works, and to see real-world examples of production code.

"FlightPath is a sophisticated academic advising package that was developed by a ULM graduate and current employee in collaboration with his colleagues — many of whom were also ULM graduates," said Taylor.

"Richard's ULM Computer Science education helped make this possible."

FlightPath's source code, as well as add-ons and a live demo are available at <http://getflightpath.com>

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