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## **Roxbury Community College launches ad-based campus wi-fi project** **College partners with West Coast, Boston firms**

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Experience.com will help combine the college's physical connectivity with its connection to the local network of employers and job opportunities, says Jennifer Floren, CEO, Experience.com

Roxbury Community College will be the first local college to launch a free, advertising-based wi-fi service through a new program created by a West Coast service provider and supported by some of the biggest names in the technology industry.

The "FreeFi University" program aims to bring free, fast and self-sustainable wireless connectivity to five colleges around the country, with Roxbury Community College (RCC) being the first. Last week, the group launched the first part of the deployment in the campus' main building, and officials at the project leader, FreeFi Networks Inc. of Los Angeles, expect to expand it campus-wide in the coming months.

FreeFi is using a business model that uses advertising and content from partner companies to generate revenue that supports the free service. According to FreeFi managing director Richard Bogen, it is a model the company has used with some success in other niche markets, such as airports. The Denver International Airport, for example, launched its network under the same model last December.

While it's not in the same geographical category, FreeFi's network will most certainly be compared to the city of Boston's municipal wi-fi project, OpenAirBoston.net. Just four weeks ago, OpenAirBoston officially launched the first pilot hotspots for its network, including one in the Grove Hall section of Roxbury. While the city's network will initially be free, it is expected to move to a fee-based model, charging \$9.95 per month.

For the university model, which was pilot-tested at Bentley College in Waltham, FreeFi has initially attracted three partners -- Microsoft Corp., Hewlett Packard Co. and career development site Experience.com, based in Boston. Microsoft's MSDN Academic Alliance and IT Academy programs, which provided software, training and certification programs to secondary education, will be included in the campuswide rollout, while HP will provide advertising and hardware for a laptop-loaner program.

Experience.com will provide its content, which helps students research and find job opportunities and career advice through its network of 3,800 universities and 100,000 employers. Experience.com CEO Jennifer Floren said the company has customized its content for Roxbury's students and expects to participate in FreeFi's program in other parts of the country.

"What we're trying to do is combine the physical connectivity for students with a connection to the local network of employers and job opportunities," Floren said.

Additional content providers, both national and local, will be considered as the project moves forward, according to officials. Bogen declined to provide financial details regarding who the additional partners may be.

"We've been able to go into airports with pay (wi-fi) service and they have been able to make more money offering a free service than they did when they were charging," he said.

FreeFi officials have not named the remaining four sites, but said the sites will vary from small, such as the 2,500-student RCC, to a school as large as 25,000 students.

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