

# Students get onboard with smart transit data

## TECHNOLOGY

When it comes to business, some students at Stony Brook University are learning a valuable lesson — the customer needs information.

So about 15 graduate and undergraduate computer science students worked for the past year putting together a global positioning system for the campus buses. The system is now being tested on five of the vehicles, and in a year or so will be on all 35. The system, called SBU Smart Transit, sends data on a bus' location and also how many passengers are onboard to a central campus server. The data is routed to campus websites. Apps for iPhone, Android and BlackBerry are planned for release before this summer.

James O'Connor, director of the college's office of sustainability, said the campus has not had such a system in place before. O'Connor added that the system is "homegrown."

Jennifer Wong, an assistant professor of computer science

who oversaw the project, said the students were involved in producing the software. "We bought off-the-shelf hardware and we built a flexible system that allows us to build future advanced elements into the system," Wong said.

Students waiting for a bus will know when it is coming, and will know the number of passengers onboard. They can then decide to get on the bus or wait for another.

The project, Wong said, gave the students "an opportunity to see the needs of the customer and how the customer is benefiting from the system. It's great to see all their hard work being utilized."

Xincheng Zhang, 22, who graduated last December and worked on the system, building a website and working on apps, is now working at Stony Brooks' Center of Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology. He said he is also applying for graduate school.

The project was among the highlights of his college years, he said. "It was a great learning experience."



PHOTO BY JOSEPH D. SULLIVAN

Stony Brook grad Xincheng Zhang, Prof. Jennifer Wong, transportation fleet manager David McAvoyn and office of sustainability director James O'Connor helped devise a campus bus information system.

about from sanctions against Iran and the prospect of gasoline topping \$4 or \$5 a gallon in this election year, the distress caused by rising oil prices is being mitigated by improved household purchasing power, a strengthening economy and America's growing energy independence.

"The threshold to withstand the run-up in energy prices is higher than most people think," Carl Riccadonna, a senior economist at Deutsche Bank Securities Inc. in Manhattan, said in a phone interview last week. "We can tolerate fuel at \$4. Job growth is stronger and incomes are looking very decent. The economy is on firmer footing."

Gross domestic product grew at a 3 percent annual rate in the fourth quarter of 2011, the most since 2010, while unemployment held at a three-year low of 8.3 percent in February, raising the likelihood consumers will boost spending. — Bloomberg News Service

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was named chief executive in 2003. In an interview he talked about the banking business, small business, housing foreclosures and the Long Island economy.

**Did you see in 2011 any evidence of renewed confidence on the part of businesses in their willingness to use their lines of credit for expanding or modernizing facilities?**

Only to a limited degree. For the most part, most of the small-business and middle-market companies that bank with us are guarded. They do not feel they are operating in a friendly business environment in terms of government — regulation has a lot to do with that. And they are suspicious of the sustainability of the economic recovery.

**Is it as easy for small businesses to borrow today as it was, say, in 2007? You've indicated that you loaned conservatively before the recession. Have you tightened any further since the recession?**

We've tightened up a tad more both on the small-business side and residential mortgage side. I think we still remain guarded about the possibility of a double dip [reces-



PHOTO BY JEREMY BALES

Michael Vittorio, president and CEO of The First National Bank of Long Island, says his bank wants to lend money but doesn't "want to put loans on the books that are going to go bad."

## CORPORATE snapshot

**Company:** The First of Long Island Inc., holding company for The First National Bank of Long Island

**Headquarters:** Glen Head

**Branches:** 35

**Stock price Friday:** \$26.20

**Employees:** 283

**Assets at end of 2011:** \$2 billion

**Net income in 2011:** \$19.46 million, or \$2.20 a share

**Allowance for loan losses at end of 2011:** \$16.6 million, or 1.68 percent of total loans

sion]. Economic data seems to indicate that will not happen, however the recovery is fragile. We want to lend money. That would help my organization, be good for my shareholders . . . but we don't want to put loans on the books that are going to go bad.

**As a banker, do you think that the right approach at this**

**point is to try to modify mortgages for people facing foreclosure or, as some people suggest, let the free market work — let the market hit bottom, let it sort itself out, then start to grow again?**

I think if you're dealing with sincere and honest [homeowners], it would be mutually beneficial to restructure the loans and give families a

chance for a new start. I think it would benefit the bank, and it would benefit those families.

**Let's define sincere and honest people.**

People who don't want to take advantage of the system. They hit some hard times, and they really intend to pay you back. It's not a trick, so to speak.

**Banks hate low interest rates, but don't they make homes and cars more affordable and stimulate the economy?**

The answer is yes, OK? But we've had them for more than two years. How much [housing] inventory do you see moving on Long Island? Ask the local residential mortgage brokers what's been going on the

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