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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Leading Northeast Help Desk Consulting Firm Hosts Successful IT Roundtable Series  
Expressly for Higher Education in New England**

**Marlborough, MA, April 21, 2003** -- In an effort to address the unique needs of support centers at colleges and universities, SMA Management Systems, an information technology consulting company with a special focus on higher education, has created a free roundtable series program for information technology specialists working at these institutions.

The program, now beginning its second year, is designed for participants to discuss how they are implementing help desk solutions and how they are addressing the support needs of their students, faculty and administrators. This venue offers participants the opportunity to network with each other, discuss common issues, share exciting initiatives and view the latest support technologies.

“From our extensive experience consulting in this industry, we understand that IT professionals working in educational institutions have their own set of needs. Staffing ranges from full-time professionals to part-time students. Their end users are very diverse too, consisting of faculty, staff and college students, each having their own set of requirements. In addition, the support center professionals are responsible for solving technology-related problems across a wide geographical area -- in a large number of buildings and sometimes even on multiple campuses,” says Steve Dreyer, SMA Principal. The roundtables address the distinct challenges and overwhelming commonalities that these professionals share, regardless of

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whether they are working in a large public or small private institution, or if they are using different technology solutions.

“We launched the program nearly a year ago and credit its success and continuation to the group members. They select the topics *they* are interested in. We provide the room, send out reminder invitations, serve as a coordinator, and share some of our experiences. Of course the collaborative nature of professionals working in the education field lends itself to this type of informational venue,” comments SMA’s Clai Marshall, who is coordinating the program. The program is held just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, a hub of many institutions of higher learning.

“I view the IT Roundtables sponsored by SMA as an opportunity to share ‘best practices’ with my peers in other educational institutions. I usually come away with an idea for a unique approach to dealing with an issue that we all have encountered at some point in time,” remarks participant Jane Boatright of the Harvard Law School.

While there is a core group of participants, IT professionals from institutions who have not yet had the opportunity to attend are welcomed and encouraged to participate.

“I’ve met people who have been in the education field for many years and others who have recently come from corporate environments - and they all contribute interesting perspectives. A venue to share ideas and experiences is invaluable, particularly in these times of ever more limited resources,” adds Boatright.

Roundtable topics have included:

- ***“The Help Desk Without Borders”*** (managing demand for extended service hours, tracking external outsource service providers);
- ***“Clarifying Expectations and Creating a Statement of Service”*** (creating and maintaining service level agreements);
- ***“How to Make Your Help Desk More Customer Oriented”*** (self-service, knowledge management and eSupport solutions); and
- ***“Marketing Your Help Desk”*** (marketing to end users and management)

For more information, or to attend the next roundtable, contact Clai Marshall at (508) 787-0884 or visit [www.smasystems.com](http://www.smasystems.com).

**About SMA and Higher Education**

Since 1984, SMA Management Systems has worked extensively with Help Desks and IT departments at universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education. Clients include Smith College, University of Massachusetts, Bentley College, Harvard Law School, Brandeis University, Milton Academy and Amherst College. Projects consist of help desk evaluations, software recommendations, product implementations and customizations, and training classes.

In addition to a close relationship with educational clients, SMA is actively involved with professional associations representing IT individuals working in the higher education sector. SMA consultants have presented at the Massachusetts Education and Computing Conference (MECC) and have participated at annual events for edACCESS (Administrative and Campus Computing Environments at Small Schools) and for Educause's affiliate, NERCOMP (Northeast Education and Computing Conference).

**SMA and the Help Desk Community**

SMA also maintains a close link with the help desk community at large. SMA consultants have been featured speakers for HDI (Help Desk Institute) groups in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Gartner Group has recognized SMA for its technology consulting, staffing and organizational methodologies. SMA also works with a variety of help desk solutions, including HEAT Service and Support, which is popular in educational institutions.

SMA has offices in White Plains, New York and Marlborough, Massachusetts. SMA services clients throughout the United States and Canada. More information on SMA Management Systems and the Higher Education Roundtable Series can be found at <http://www.smasystems.com>.

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