

MARK BURGESS

the profession of system administration



OSLO UNIVERSITY OFFERS MASTER'S DEGREE IN NETWORK/SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

Mark Burgess has a Ph.D. in theoretical physics and lives in Oslo, Norway. A 14-year veteran of system administration research, he has written 9 books and has published over 40 papers in international journals.

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Editor's Note: For system administration to be recognized as a profession, some sort of accredited training must exist. I asked Mark to write about his university's new program as an FYI for our readers and a spur for other universities.

Mark was recently made the world's first full professor specifically in the field of system administration. His paper "On the Theory of System Administration," published in *Science of Computer Programming* last year, has been the journal's top downloaded paper since it appeared.—RK

AT OSLO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, THE two-year international Master's degree in Network and System Administration has now been running for just over a year. All teaching is carried out in English.

Although there has been no advertising of the course, the number of applications has been high. In the first year, 99 people applied for the 10 places, with 32 applications coming from outside Norway. This year, 155 applied for the 10 places, of whom 55 were from outside Norway. Many potential students apply from from Asia and Africa, and a few from Europe. Only one so far has applied from the U.S.

Students are led through four stages of development in the four semesters of the course:

- Learning basic principles
- Developing independent investigative skills and learning how to write documentation
- Extending analytical and critical skills
- Putting everything together in a final project, preferably in an industrial setting

Some unusual aspects of the curriculum include a course in supercomputers and virtual machines (with the generous help of IBM); a course in analytical methods based on Mark Burgess's latest book, *Analytical Network and System Administration: Managing Human-Computer Systems*; and a comprehensive course in ethics and social aspects of system administration.