Trying to find information about services and events hosted by the UI just got a little easier. The Office of Public Engagement is hosting a website that provides easy access to this information all in one place.

The online database – engage.illinois.edu – includes program descriptions, contact information and registration requirements for workshops, seminars, summer camps, festivals and other events sponsored by UI units, including UI Extension.

“The Public Engagement Portal is the most comprehensive source of public engagement programming offered by our campus … specifically created to serve the community,” said Steve Sonka, vice chancellor for public engagement.

“The portal actually went online at the first Public Engagement Symposium in March 2009,” Sonka said. “We waited to publicize it until now so we could work with campus units and our advisory group to gather information representing a more complete picture of the range of programs we offer and put in place measures to keep it up-to-date.”

Users can browse events by keyword, content area, audience or location or search by keyword.

Much of the site is generated by pulling information from RSS feeds and campus calendars set up through Web Services’ Toolbox. Anyone with a university NET ID also may add programs or events to the portal.

The Office for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in the College of Education took the lead in creating the site.

“This looked like an opportunity where the MSTE office could make a difference,” said George Reese, director of MSTE. “We have a background in public engagement.

“Our office has been working in K-12 education for a long time,” he said, adding that the office works to integrate technology into math and science programs. “Putting (the site) together is a complex process that has involved a lot of people volunteering their time.”

The site also is helping the UI to fulfill its mission of public engagement.