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Overview and Status of the MicroTCA for Physics Standards Effort

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The effort to develop extensions to the MicroTCA standards in support of physics applications has had mixed results.

Extensions to the hardware standards to define common I/O interfaces and analog signal distribution paths have defined and approved, with commercial hardware conforming to the new standards already available for purchase. Extensions to the hardware standards to provide for distribution of clocks, triggers, and interlocks are well-advanced. Both efforts have been bolstered by enthusiastic support from both a variety of lab users and a variety of hardware vendors.

Extensions to software practices and standards, however, have been stymied by a relative dearth of support from lab users and by the self-limiting of industry participation largely to the role of observer. One guideline, for a common device access framework, has been drafted and a first-pass reference implementation has been created; however, further progress has been halted due to a lack of application-oriented test and review. A draft guideline for a standard process model has been half-completed, but completion and prototyping are on hold pending availability of a willing author/implementer with EPICS expertise. Other guidelines and prototypes have also stalled for lack of authors and implementers.

The Software and Protocols committee is issuing a plea for lab participation in the software standards effort.

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