

James Mehling/DN

Institute brings visuals, excitement to learning

By Tanna Kinnaman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska high school students will soon experience simulated flights up the Missouri river and across the Nebraska plains.

Thanks to a \$1,499,750 grant from NASA that was divided between two institutions.

The Center for Advanced Land Management Information and Systems (CALMIT) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln received \$689,750 and California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory received \$810,000.

Both institutions will set up the Consortium for the Application of Space Data to Education (CASDE) that will rely on image processing and visualization technology to link students between satellite data and the Internet.

"Students will be able to download NASA satellite data in Nebraska classrooms through the Internet," said Priscilla Grew, vice chancellor for research and professor of Geology, Conservation and Survey.

Donald C. Rundquist, director of CALMIT, said, "Picture two scenarios. In one, a middle school geography teacher tells students that they will begin a unit on the Missouri River ecosystem and should pick up one of the map handouts up front and open their books to page X.

"In another, the teacher asks students to insert the compact disk of NASA images into their computers and call up the simulated low-level fly-through of the lower Missouri Valley.

"These kids have grown up in a 'video-game' world. They go home and play with the computer. And

they've got CDs with virtual trips through fantasy worlds. Then they go to school and watch a teacher write on a blackboard. It's just not as exciting. So we're trying to bring that kind of technology and excitement into the learning process."

This one year project will be brought into pilot schools in either Omaha or Lincoln, he said.

"The project will rely on top-flight educators who have already been recognized for their excellence, such as Roger Kassebaus of Omaha's Millard North High School," Rundquist said.

Grew said Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb. was instrumental in getting the grant from NASA.

"Senator Kerrey put our UNL faculty in touch with scientists at the Jet Propulsion Lab at Caltech and they were able to create this joint project which takes advantage of the expertise present at both of our institutions.

"It will also be our gateway to receive the new information which will be coming from NASA's Earth Observing System. It puts the capabilities of space technology to use in helping us to learn more about our own planet and our climate and landscapes in Nebraska.

"Not only will students be able to closely view the earth's surface, but they can call up Nebraska on their computer screen and see such things as the afternoon's clouds and current vegetation patterns," Grew said.

UNL will allocate \$209,000 of its grant to the John Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth which will provide supplemental educational materials for high schools and evaluate the success of the grant program.

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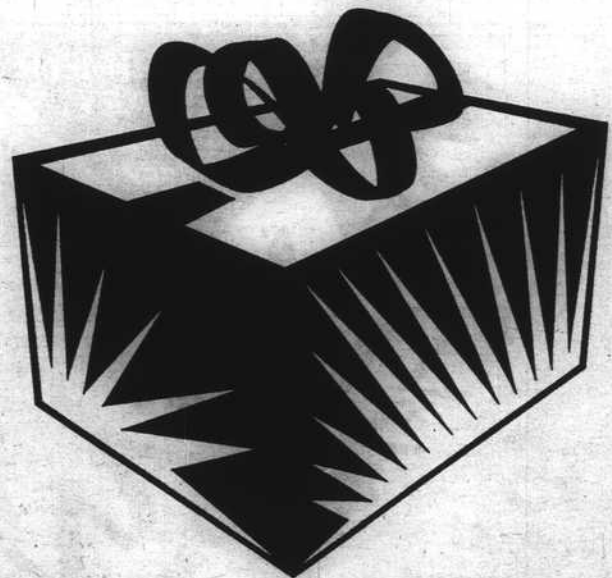
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