



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **UND's AgCam Ready for Launch to International Space Station** *Agricultural Camera Sendoff Event on February 25, 2008*

*Grand Forks, ND* – North Dakota is poised to send its first scientific instrument into space. An Earth-observing sensor built by students and faculty at the University of North Dakota departs February 26 from campus to NASA's Kennedy Space Center, where it will be prepared for launch to the International Space Station.

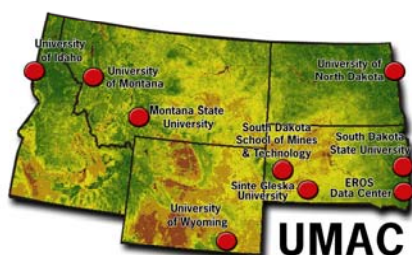
The soon-to-be-orbiting instrument called AgCam will monitor the health of crops and other plants. The public and media will have a final opportunity to see AgCam and learn more about its uses before it leaves the university.

A news conference and AgCam demonstration will be held **Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 9 a.m. in the atrium of 300 Clifford Hall on the UND campus.** Presentations will be given by UND President Charles Kupchella, NASA Astronaut Mario Runco, AgCam project manager Doug Olsen, Will Semke of the UND School of Engineering and Mines, and Gary Wagner, a Crookston, MN farmer.

**An evening sendoff event for the public will also take place February 25<sup>th</sup> beginning at 7 p.m. in Clifford Hall Auditorium, room 210.** A reception follows at 8 p.m. in Clifford Hall 220. The sendoff event is free and open to all.

At Kennedy Space Center, NASA engineers will safeguard AgCam until it is ready to package onto the space shuttle. AgCam is tentatively scheduled for a late-October 2008 launch to the International Space Station. There it will be installed by astronauts and begin sending data during the 2009 growing season.

A student-run Scientific Operations Center at the University of North Dakota will send commands to AgCam for a daily schedule of Earth observations, and process and deliver images returned from AgCam each day. The Scientific Operations Center will connect North Dakotans and others in neighboring states with unique information they are receiving from space.



#### **Upper Midwest Aerospace Consortium**

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Farmers, ranchers, tribal officials, land-use managers and educators will have an opportunity to request assessments of the vegetation on their fields. The combination of fine detail, multiple color bands, frequent observations and speed of delivery to users has not previously been met with other Earth observing satellites.

AgCam was a response to needs expressed by a large community of land and natural resource managers who are served by the Upper Midwest Aerospace Consortium (UMAC). UMAC is headquartered at UND's Northern Great Plains Center for People and the Environment. "The consortium exists to bring benefits from the space program to residents of the region," said Center Director George Seielstad. "At long last we have a system tailored to helping them economically, while maintaining a healthy environment."

Over a period of seven years, 44 students and numerous faculty have helped bring AgCam to completion. 14 graduate student thesis projects have been based on research for AgCam, and 8 departments at UND were involved in the development of the sophisticated camera.

Doug Olsen directed the project throughout. His work with the students convinced him that the type of hands-on project-oriented education is an excellent way to prepare students. "My greatest reward has been to see the careers they have been able to jumpstart because of their experience with AgCam," said Olsen.

Will Semke of UND's Department of Mechanical Engineering calls the collaborative project a major accomplishment for the university. "The direct interactions with NASA have provided tremendous opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students in the School of Engineering and Mines and beyond," Semke said.

For more information contact Karen Katrinak at the Northern Great Plains Center for People and the Environment, 701-777-2482, or [katrinak@aero.und.edu](mailto:katrinak@aero.und.edu).

*About the Northern Great Plains Center for People and the Environment and UMAC*

*The Northern Great Plains Center for People and the Environment was established at the University of North Dakota in April 2001. It is the core component of the Upper Midwest Aerospace Consortium (UMAC), which includes participants from academia, industry, and government in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. The vision of the Center is to build and nurture learning communities, creating an integrated view of all Earth's systems, in order to serve humankind's needs and desires for a sustainable and prosperous future. For more information about UMAC visit <http://www.umac.org>.*

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