



News Release

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WESTERN BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$135,000 GRANT

St. Joseph, Mo. —Sept. 17, 2004—The biology department at Missouri Western State College recently received a grant for \$135,000 from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). The grant, the third from ESRI in two years, is for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software that will enhance the software and equipment that Western received from the two previous grants.

“We now have four of the most powerful and heavily used (software) extensions and a mobile GIS,” said Dr. Cary Chevalier, associate professor of biology and principal investigator of the grant. The new software offers geostatistical, three-dimensional and survey analyses extensions to the previously obtained ArcGIS package.

The software, which includes licenses for a 25-seat lab, is primarily used for geospatial analysis classes and projects by students and faculty in the biology department but is available for any courses interested in geospatial analysis classes. Dr. Chevalier said this kind of training is particularly important for students in the wildlife conservation management degree program. He noted that, in recent years, there has been a marked increase in the expectations of natural resource agencies and businesses for graduates in these fields to have GIS and Global Positioning System experience.

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Page 2 of 2 – ESRI Grant

“Four out of every five job announcements for positions within conservation or natural resource management are requiring some literacy in geospatial analysis.” He added that giving Western students this experience makes them “nationally competitive” in the job market when they graduate. “Our data suggests that over 95 percent of our students in this (conservation and wildlife management) program get jobs within a year.”

However, Dr. Chevalier said that the system has multidisciplinary functions. “I can’t think of a professional discipline that could not use GPS and GIS for one task or another.”

Dr. Chevalier has been offering three-day workshops in mapping grade GPS for three years, and has offered 17 workshops in the past two years to meet the increasing demand. The next workshop is scheduled for December.

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.