

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
On Track - Undergraduate And Postgraduate Space Education (2)

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INTEGRATED, ONLINE SPACE STUDIES GRADUATE PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITY OF NORTH
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Abstract

The Department of Space Studies at the University of North Dakota (UND) was established in 1987. The same year, the department started offering its Masters degree in Space Studies to a small group of students enrolled through the traditional campus based program. The program now nearing a quarter century of operation, integrates the science and engineering aspects of space with policy, history, law and commerce. The increased use of the Internet in the nineties and a steady demand for distance education prompted the department to look at other innovative methods of delivering the program. By 1996, the Department of Space Studies began offering classes through distance learning via <http://www.space.edu>. Distance learning was immediately successful, and by 1998, the Department of Space Studies became the largest graduate program at UND. The department continues to offer both campus and distance based programs, and over 650 Master of Science Degrees in Space Studies have been awarded since the department's inception in 1987. Buoyed with the success of online space studies education at the Master's level, a Ph.D. program is being established. UND's Space Studies graduates have careers in a variety of different space-related disciplines including government, business, science, law, medicine, education, military, and public relations.

The Space Studies program at UND combines synchronous and asynchronous communication models to keep the students motivated and connected to the program. The program attracts high quality part time students, primarily working professionals from the space industry, who bring in a wealth of practical experience and knowledge to the class room, enhancing the peer learning process. The paper will discuss the challenges and benefits of space studies online education.