Last month’s report focused on the HMI E/PO program at Stanford. This month’s will focus on the SPOT and other programs being undertaken at Montana State University.

**SPOT Program**

The main focus of the MSU E/PO effort for AIA continues to be the SPOT program, in which undergraduate students are trained to give presentations of NASA space science, and then carry these presentations to schools all across Montana. Some of the present effort follows through on connections made in the spring 2004 semester. That term predates the AIA subcontract for MSU; nevertheless it is mentioned here because of the relevance to the current term. During this period, SPOT teams visited some 22 schools across the state, and 7 other organizations or events (e.g., Billings Science Fair, Laurel Aviation Days). More than 2000 students attended, representing approximately one percent of all school-aged children in the state. Additionally, more than 240 teachers attended the presentations.

Interest in the program was very high in the spring semester, and in fact a number of requests could not be fulfilled due to the exceptional demand. To meet some of the outstanding requests from the spring 2004 semester, several of the most effective presenters from last year have been invited to join this year’s program. Since they are already familiar with the organization of the team, and with most of the material in the presentation, it is anticipated that less time will be required for orientation and training. After a brief re-verification, these returning students will be ready to give presentations to the schools which were not served during the spring. Additionally, it is expected that these returning students will assist in the training of the newer students.

Recruitment of new team members is currently in full swing. Two graduate students, Trae Winter and Angela Des Jardins, have signed on to manage the program. Eric Brunsell, a graduate student in education, is joining the team to undertake an evaluation of the SPOT program, its curricula, the methods we use for recruitment and training, and the efficacy of the visitations. To recruit new presenters, fliers have been printed and distributed as color transparencies to all the teaching faculty in the physics department, for display at the beginning of lectures. The SPOT program was also registered with the Student Activities organization on campus. The benefits of this registration include free posting of recruitment fliers at 135 locations around campus, and inclusion in the Student Activities Awareness Fair, a one-day event to showcase all the clubs and activities that are available to students. These efforts culminate in an information meeting on Monday, September 27, at which we met more than 40 potential new SPOT presenters.

An additional new aspect of the recruitment effort is a specific approach to Native American undergraduate students. We are arranging to give a presentation to the Designing Our Community project, a college-retention program within the College of
Engineering tailored to Native American students. Our presentation will describe opportunities for students to be involved in space science and related engineering and E/PO activities on campus, including the SPOT program.

Though the program is well known across the state, we continue to advertise to teachers. First, we are actively contacting the teachers who were placed on the waiting list last semester. Second, SPOT will have a presence at the annual Montana Educators Association-Montana Federation of Teachers meeting in October. Third, SPOT appears prominently on the Montana Space Grant website. And finally, a new cooperation has just been formed with the JASON project in Montana, to ensure that teachers working with JASON know when SPOT visits are being planned in their communities.

Another important new aspect of the SPOT program is the expansion into a second Organizational Center. The SPOT program has traveled far and wide to disseminate NASA space science. However, whereas the program has always been operated from MSU in Bozeman, the “center of mass” of Montana’s population is further north and west. Beginning in the fall 2004 semester, we are working with Professor Diane Friend at the University of Montana in Missoula to set up a team of SPOT presenters at that university. This will help us to serve the state’s students more efficiently. Professor Friend has hired a student to manage the program, and has begun recruiting participants.

**Partnerships**
The SPOT program has always operated under the auspices of the Montana Space Grant Consortium. MSGC will continue to offer managerial support and assistance with teacher contacts. Moreover, the director of National Space Grant, Professor Bill Hiscock, is currently head of the MSU Physics Department. Professor Hiscock has offered the services of the organization to help disseminate SDO’s EPO products nationwide.

Another potential symbiosis is forming from MSU’s involvement in the NASA MUCERPI grant won by Salish Kootenai College, a tribal college in northwest Montana. MSU scientists and the SPOT team have been asked to speak to students in the reservation schools about opportunities in space science (especially in Montana), in part to build interest among the students in the MUCERPI program, and in part to disseminate NASA science to the students.

This year we will also focus on more direct collaboration between MSU’s SPOT program and Stanford’s Science Fellow program. Our hope is to have the students learn from their counterparts, with special emphasis on the differences of dealing with diverse inner city environments in California vs. the rural Native American schools in Montana. We envision a series of videoconferences between the Stanford Fellows and the MSU (and UM) presenters, to allow the students themselves the opportunity to analyze and contrast the two programs.