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A Heavenly View

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A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT"A HEAVENLY VIEW"

by Dr. Leo Goodman-Malamuth

GSU ARCHIVES

At the time of the Fall convocation, I promised the university community that I would keep you informed of progress being made toward the establishment of a communications teleport at Governors State University. I am pleased to announce that, with the installation of the new satellite antenna to the east of our main entrance, the university has taken the first of several major steps to make our dreams become realities. This action will affect all of us, either directly or indirectly: functionally, this antenna of the highest quality will allow us to receive and redistribute information from virtually any satellite serving North America; symbolically, it vigorously communicates that we have the capability, the capacity, and the vision to be a major participant and leader -- not only in the use of this technology, but in many other ways in which we also serve and interact with our region, the state, and beyond. Because your curiosity would not -- and should not -- be satisfied simply by being told that the satellite station is in place, I would like to share with you some additional information about it.

What is it? This is the first installation of a new 4.5-meter (14½-foot diameter) receive-only earth station manufactured by the Andrew Corporation. The Governors State installation was used as a model with the very engineers who designed the station providing the assembling and testing. An antenna of extraordinarily high quality, it possesses motorized adjustments which allow it to move between any satellites in the so-called "domestic arc." International transmissions can be received via domestic satellites.

Can we originate programs by satellite? We cannot send programming with this receive-only antenna. However, later this year we hope to be linked with the United Video Chicago Teleport to accomplish transmission. United Video's \$3 million facility, located only 3½ miles from our campus, is the unit which has made WGN-TV a national "super" station. It is capable of transmitting to any satellite domestically, and of providing entry to any international satellite transmission. More than likely, the first events to originate from GSU will come in late 1986 or early 1987, after careful planning and coordination.

How will the new antenna be used? The first use of the antenna took place on February 20 when the Board of Governors met at GSU. The agenda included a discussion of possible tuition increases for next year. As a portion of my "President's Report," we brought in -- by satellite -- U.S. Sen. Paul Simon of Illinois and Dr. C. Ronald Kimberling of the U.S. Department of Education. Sen. Simon is a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and the Humanities, and Dr. Kimberling is acting assistant secretary for postsecondary education. Following 25 minutes of answering questions about student assistance for members of our board, the Washington pair spent an additional 20 minutes at a press conference with Chicago area reporters who were in one of the ICC studios. The entire event demonstrated our ability for creative use of technology in bringing people together for discussion of issues of a substantive nature. Incidentally, we believe it was the first time an Illinois governmental body has used a satellite hook-up to meet with outside sources.

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What are other used for the new antenna? While the possibilities for this new university facility are limitless, the following are likely uses:

- * Videoconferences -- The down-link provides an opportunity to bring to campus national figures who might not otherwise be available. Critical and timely subjects will be made available to us and will complement -- not be a substitute for -- activities in continuing education and professional development.
- * Distribution of Telecourse Materials -- Currently, our acquired telecourses are received on tapes that are copies of copies, often extending to a third or fourth generation. Many of these now will be received by satellite, directly from master tapes.
- * Special Events and Projects -- The university now will have access to many events distributed by satellite and available for taping or for live distribution. These might include pictures sent back to earth by Voyager via NASA, hearings in Washington, live sessions of the Canadian Parliament, a particular speech, or projects which we design and which are funded either externally or by various units within the university.
- * Private Sector Applications -- Communications infrastructure now is considered a critical element in economic development. We hope to use our satellite communications capacity to seed demonstration projects and to allow our business and industrial community the opportunity to gain quick access to essential information without high capital costs. We have a strong commitment to this since the business community worked closely in our ground station planning and provided the majority of the funds for our equipment (no state appropriated dollars were used).
- * Satellite Program Services -- While we do not have an automatic right to use anything available on the satellite, we will be seeking clearances where appropriate and we will be affiliating with associations or networks which will provide access to materials we desire to use.

I am most happy that the university has reached this important juncture in its still young existence. Already, Governors State University is a leader in the field of education by telecommunications. With the addition of this important tool, our good reputation will continue to grow by great proportions.