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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Campus tree survey is part of Morris campus preservation plan

Summary:

(February 24, 2004)-by Matt Gilmore '05, UMM News Service -- The Getty Grant Program recently awarded \$180,000 to the University of Minnesota, Morris for the development of a preservation plan for the West Central School of Agriculture and Experiment Station Historic District (WCSA). The district is located at the heart of the UMM campus. The grant money is not only being used to preserve the buildings on campus, but the trees and landscaping as well.

UMM senior Jason Phelps, Coffeyville, Kan., is conducting a survey of campus trees in order to make monitoring and upkeep easier and more cost effective. Since September 2003, Phelps has collected information on about 675 trees, and estimates that another 600 remain in order to complete the survey.

To collect the data Phelps uses a handheld computer that includes a global positioning system (GPS) to show the latitude and longitude location of the trees through satellites. Standing next to the particular tree he wishes to add to his inventory, Phelps uses the handheld computer to find its location as well as to store the information he is gathering.

He has also been collecting information such as type, height, canopy size (width from one side of the tree to the other, leaf edge to leaf edge), diameter of the trunk at breast height, condition, and location. All of this information is stored and directly transferred from the handheld using ArcPad software into ArcView, the desktop mapping software. Longitude and latitude were added to a computer animated drawing (CAD) of the campus and used as the base map. This software will make maintenance of the trees an easier task, according to Phelps. The information in ArcView can be updated by adding another layer, making it possible to compare tree growth. Additional information such as soil condition and pH (amount of acidity in the soil) will be collected and added to the map in years to come.

Prior to beginning the survey, Phelps was told what needed to be done and how much money he had to work with. He believes that the easy data collection in the field and the ArcView should make continual monitoring and updating of trees a realistic task.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.