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First session of space university ends at MIT

One hundred and four men and women from 21 nations wound up an intensive nine-week study and research programme in Cambridge, Massachusetts August 20 to become the first graduates of the International Space University (ISU)

The new university, based temporarily on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation founded in April of 1987 to serve industrial, academic and governmental institutions concerned with space research and development. It's long-term goal is to become a worldwide center for training tomorrow's space professionals.

Next summer ISU expects to continue its programme from a site in Europe. It will move to other international locations in subsequent years until International Space Year in 1992, when a permanent headquarters will be chosen and the graduate programme will be expanded to a full two years. Eventually, the space university hopes to have access to orbital facilities researcher and students.

Students attending this year's ISU summer session at MIT either have full scholarships. They have been selected for their excellence in a variety of specialised disciplines, for their leadership skills and for their professional experience. Most range in age from 20 to 40. All have previously finished at least one other graduate course. All speak English and at least one other language and share a common interest in space exploration and development.

Canada, the United Kingdom the United States and the Soviet Union have the largest student contingents at this year's session. The People's Republic of China, France the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan have the next largest delegations. Other countries represented are Australia, Belium Brazil, Ecuador, Greece, India, Italy, Kenya, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates.

In contrast to conventional graduate programmes, the courses at ISU are aimed at providing a broad understanding of many space-related fields. The programme supplements engineering and sciences with courses and lectures in life sciences, business and management, policy and law, resources and manufacturing architecture and satellite applications.

The ISU students have spent at least 40 per cent of their time on a lunar base design project applying knowledge learned in the class room to a real-simulation. The design project, officially known as the International Lunar Initiative, has been directed by Wendell Mendell and John Alred of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Johnson Space Centre.