

NSF Awards Major Grant to NET Television and the University of Nebraska State Museum for Antarctica Documentary and Outreach Project

LINCOLN, Neb. (Sept. 29, 2006) -- The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a \$1,168,014 grant to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) to support the production and development of the science education project "IPY (International Polar Year): Engaging Antarctica." The project includes a public television documentary produced by NET Television for broadcast as part of the NOVA series on PBS as well as nationwide community outreach activities developed by the University of Nebraska State Museum.

"IPY: Engaging Antarctica" will help people understand and know more about Antarctic research and discovery. The project will focus on explorations by the multinational, NSF-funded Antarctic Drilling Program (ANDRILL). The ANDRILL program, managed by UNL, is a new and ambitious drilling program that builds on a legacy of international efforts to recover important geological records that lie hidden beneath Antarctica's icy blanket. ANDRILL's main goals are to investigate Antarctica's role in global environmental change over the past 65 million years and to better understand what may happen to the frozen continent because of global changes.

"Antarctica's Icy Secrets" will be produced by NET Television in partnership with WGBH, Boston and NOVA as part of the NOVA science series on PBS. The one-hour episode, shot in high definition, will examine global climate change through the exciting Antarctic research conducted in concert with the International Polar Year.

Starting in October 2006, the program will document adventurous research efforts in Antarctica, including prospecting for fossil dinosaurs, coring ice for clues about ancient environments, and the ANDRILL initiative which will drill beneath the ice for rock cores. The NET Television production team will make a number of trips to the area to capture the excitement and challenges of Antarctic research on the Ross Ice Shelf, McMurdo Sound, Mount Erebus, the Dry Valleys and fossil-rich islands near the Antarctic Peninsula.

In the U.S. and Europe, the documentary will follow related investigations in labs and coastal sites with evidence of ancient sea levels. "Antarctica's Icy Secrets" will combine live-action documentary sequences and archival footage with interviews, aerials and spectacular 3-D animation.

Community outreach for the project is being developed through the University of Nebraska State Museum and includes an innovative approach that combines education with the latest technologies. The result is the "flexhibit" -- a digital package of high resolution images, multimedia files, and inquiry-based activities accessible via the web. For example, "flexhibit" images will feature ANDRILL scientists at work, and audio files, available as podcasts, will tell scientist's stories in their own words, speaking directly to youth and other users about the joys and challenges of their work in Antarctica. Outreach partners include the Technology Education Research Center (TERC) and the 4-H youth development organizations of 22 states including Nebraska. 4-H youth organizations, schools and community groups will be able to download the exhibit, pod casts and activities to create their own International Polar Year multimedia events.

NET Television has produced three NOVA productions, including the recent "Ancient Refuge in the Holy Land." It has produced many programs for national PBS series, such as the Peabody Award-winning "Monkey Trial" for "American Experience" and, most recently, "Willa Cather: The Road Is All" for "American Masters." Viewers across the country will soon view NET Television's productions of "Buffett and Gates Go Back to School" and "At Close Range with National Geographic."

NET Television is a service of NET. For more information about NET, go to netNebraska.org.

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NET Television:

NET1 is Nebraska's first public television broadcast service and includes PBS and award-winning, locally produced public television programming; **NET2** offers live coverage of the Nebraska Unicameral, Spanish language programming and other acquired or locally produced programs; **NET3** is a 24-hour channel featuring the most popular how-to, travel and lifestyle series; and **NET-HD** presents high-definition digital broadcast programming displayed in a wide-screen format.