

Space Law Professor is Invited Speaker At Gathering of World Experts

Contributed by Andrew Abernathy
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Joanne Gabrynowicz

OXFORD, Miss. - Space is not just for astronauts and scientists anymore. As satellite and remote sensing technology advances, the lawyers, farmers and policymakers of the future are taking notice.

As part of Statistics from Space, a recent convention of world experts on remote sensing, agriculture and space law, a University of Mississippi law professor was invited to make a presentation on current research at UM's National Center for Remote Sensing, Air and Space Law.

Joanne Gabrynowicz, director of the center, spoke at the convention last month in Seattle, and coordinated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Her presentation dealt with the importance of archiving data collected by satellites and how that information can affect public policy and aid in planning agricultural and urban development. She used examples of data collected from irrigation systems and food producers across the world to show how they establish a basis for decision-making for agricultural planners, economists, lawmakers, industry leaders and scientists.

"What I learned is that remote sensing has begun to be noticed by organizations that traditionally don't have anything to do with space," Gabrynowicz said.

The foundation invited several other experts in their fields, including an environmental scholar, members of a satellite mapping organization and satellite designers, as well as representatives from the European Commission, United Nations and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The underlying purpose of the meeting was to determine how developing technologies can be used for the public good, including aiding countries that are still technologically less advanced as the world continues to transition from the industrial to the technological age.

The Statistics from Space participants established four long-term goals during the convention, according to an outline of the gathering. These goals include the "accurate and timely" monitoring of agricultural statistics, providing accurate production forecasts, monitoring food distribution and land uses, and establishing free, public access to that information.

Gabrynowicz, a graduate of Hunter College and Yeshiva University, joined the UM faculty in 2001 after being recruited from the University of North Dakota, where she was a founding member of the space studies program. She is a frequent guest lecturer on space law around the world. In 2007 she was elected to the board of directors for the International Institute of Space Law, where she advises lawmakers on the construction of space laws in developing nations.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is based in Seattle and is one of the world's largest private foundations. According to the foundation's Web site, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org>, the organization's primary interests are the global enhancement of health care and the reduction of poverty. In the U.S., its primary focus is on educational issues and the improvement of information technology.

For more information about the National Center for Remote Sensing, Air and Space Law, visit <http://www.spacelaw.olemiss.edu> .