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## INFORMATION MEETING:

Wednesday, April 10 • 7:00 @ Rudder Tower #704  
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## Roundtable group debates forensic research center

By Lisa Johnson  
THE BATTALION

Forensics experts, a lawyer and several Texas A&M professors Tuesday discussed establishing a center for forensic research at A&M.

Dr. Ron D. MacFarlane, an A&M chemistry professor, said participants in the roundtable debated options for a forensic center. "I think this discussion is definitely a first step," he said. "A center for an interdisciplinary science involves people from many fields and departments."

"It's like we're all behind the starting line wondering if we should run the race." The discussion about the forensics center ended a day-long forum on forensics as an interdisciplinary field sponsored by the A&M chapter of the Sigma Xi research society.

Addresses were given by William M. Bass, professor emeritus and director of the University of Tennessee's Forensic Anthropology Center, and attorney Travis B. Bryan III of the Bryan law firm of Youngkin, Catlin, Bryan, Stacy and Dillard.

In addition, three A&M professors spoke about the connection of their individual science fields to the study of forensics.

MacFarlane presented information about using drug testing in court cases.

He said it is possible for common medications to cause individuals to test positive for other types of drugs.

"There are two kinds of amphetamines, a right and a left kind," he said. "The left type is the type that causes illegal effects, but Vicks Vapo-Rub contains the right type. So if a person is using it, it can cause them to test positive for amphetamines in their initial drug test."

MacFarlane said that when amphetamines are detected, the person is interviewed by a

medical officer to determine the positive result was caused by accident or by an over-the-counter medication, such as cold or flu remedy.

In addition, he said, tests available to determine if a person who tested positive for marijuana might have done so because of contaminated poppy seeds, which contain low levels of morphine.

MacFarlane said a test to detect whether a person who tested positive for marijuana actually smoked a marijuana cigarette or simply breathed second-hand smoke.

Dr. James R. Wild, head of the Department of Biophysics and Biophysics, discussed DNA technology.

"There have been cases which they have shown to certain people actually in the envelope of a threatened letter by analyzing trace saliva," he said. "What is so credible technology that is far beyond anything we saw in the O.J. (Simpson) trial."

Wild also spoke about DNA testing is used in anthropology to identify the bodies as well as the means of death, of famous historical figures.

Dr. Steven M. Smith, associate professor of psychology, discussed eyewitnesses.

Smith said juries often believe the somewhat unreliable testimony of eyewitnesses over more accurate physical evidence.

"Eyewitnesses have a much bigger chance of error than other types of evidence because people believe their memories even when they are wrong," he said. "My colleagues and I always laugh when we hear people say that they have all the evidence and that they wish they had an eyewitness testimony to support it."

Sigma Xi is a national organization that promotes the development of the interdisciplinary sciences. The A&M chapter is open to members by invitation only.

## news BRIEFS

### Vietnam refugee to discuss Asian art

Da-Thao "Lyly" Dao, a former Texas A&M student and Vietnam refugee, will discuss at 7 p.m. in 223J MSC her perspectives on Chinese and Vietnamese art gained while studying in China.

Dao studied Eastern art during the summer of 1995, majoring in computer science with a minor in fine arts.

Dao donated her painting "George and Barbara Bush" to the George Bush Presidential Library, and two of her paintings are hanging in the MSC Student Programs Office.

Admission to Dao's presentation is free.

### KAMU receives public broadcasting award

Texas A&M's KAMU-TV was awarded one of seven 21st Century Awards given to visionary public broadcasters by America's Public Television Stations.

Dr. Rodney Zent, the director of Educational Broadcast Service, accepted the award on behalf of KAMU.

Under Zent's stewardship, KAMU has served as A&M's main resource for distance learning opportunities. On April 3, in partnership with GTE, KAMU opened the Center for Distance Learning and Research.

The Center will offer training in distance learning and the latest applied telecommunications technology.

### Schools told to abandon affirmative action

ATLANTA (AP) — In the wake of recent federal court rulings limiting affirmative action, Georgia's attorney general has directed the state university system to abandon admission policies that give preference to minorities.

In an unsolicited letter Monday to University System Chancellor Stephen Portch, Attorney General Michael Bowers said each state college and university should eliminate policies that use separate standards for minorities.

## THE BATTALION

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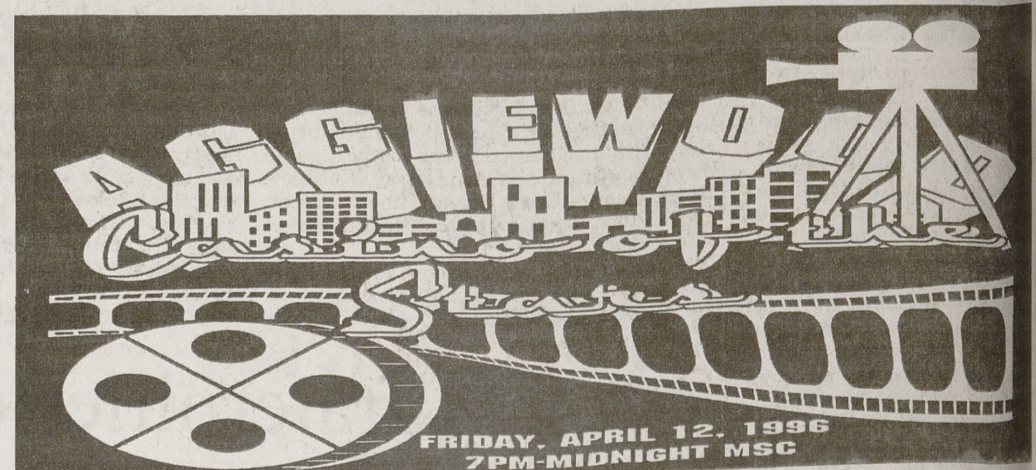
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