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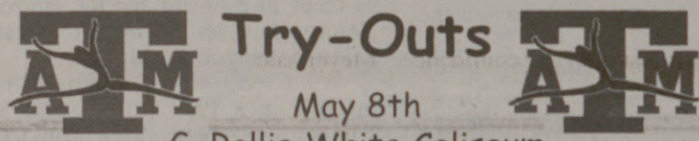
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Universe

Continued from page 1

the universe to which we've been driven by observations."

Kirshner said the ESSENCE, or Equation of State: Supernovae Trace Cosmic Expansion project, a group in Chile observing and measuring dark energy, will help to expand this research on the accelerated expanding universe and would tell scientists whether or not there is a cosmological constant similar to Einstein's.

"This cannot fail to be interesting," Kirshner said.

Kirshner said the Hubble Telescope, with its new camera, is allowing scientists to greatly observe supernovae, but will soon need additional instruments which would have to be installed during a special space mission. Kirshner said that currently NASA won't allow the mission

because it is deemed too risky.

"The space telescope is working better than ever, and we will have useful science until 2007," Kirshner said. "If the space telescope is kept running, that's good; but if not, we will be able to make some progress, but not as much."

Kirshner said NASA can change its decision and urged the audience to call their senators and voice their support for the mission through Senate Resolution 324.

Ashley Pagnotta, a sophomore physics major, helped organize "Mitchell Symposium on Observational Cosmology," an astronomy conference that will run April 12-16 in Rudder Tower. More than 40 astronomers will give lectures all week, with at least one featured astronomer each night. Pagnotta said the organizers chose Kirshner to kick off the conference because he is the foremost astronomer in the nation.

Roland Allen, A&M physics professor and chair of the conference, said the goal of this conference is to start an astronomy program at A&M.

"Texas A&M wants to be a top-10 public university, and the fact of the matter is we'll never make it to the top 10 if we don't have an astronomy program," Allen said. "It's quite feasible, and we're hoping to get people in place this September."

Allen said this conference is featuring world-famous astronomers, and by developing ties with these astronomers, A&M will be able to start a world-class program.

"One-third of the top astronomers in the world will be here for this conference," Allen said. "These astronomers are the class we want to hire here at A&M, and they will give us advice on how to build a first-rate program."

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THE BATTALION
Elizabeth N. Webb, Editor in Chief
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