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NATION

Students talk about shuttle

Some say the accident should not have happened considering the resources available to NASA.

BY AMBER TAFOVA
The Shorthorn staff

As the world reacted to the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster, engineering students held discussions in and outside of class this week.

Just days after the Columbia broke apart over North Texas, students and faculty raised questions about ethics and mechanical errors — all the while remembering alumna Kalpana Chawla, who died along with six other astronauts in the tragedy.

Aerospace engineer junior Jesse Bennett said he hopes to find a job at NASA and would work on a mission if he had the chance. Bennett said the disaster has launched discussions about both the technical and ethical

aspects of the mission.

"It's sad such a tragedy has to happen before the American public realizes what is going on with the space program," he said.

Aerospace engineer senior Flavien Thomas said the crisis will only raise interests in NASA and the space program. He said he still supports space exploration and would go on a mission if offered.

"It's the most dangerous job," he said. "But you have the best and the brightest people going."

Thomas said the space program's contributions, such as medical research, outweigh the possible consequences. People need to realize that research into cures for cancer and other potentially deadly diseases affects them directly, he said.

"The medical field has made advances, and some people will have a longer life because of that," he said.

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Indian population mourns Chawla

Indian students say Kalpana Chawla broke from traditional roles and is an inspiration to her countrymen.

BY BRAD ROLLINS
The Shorthorn staff

Ajay Divekar and Vinayak Shammaa were tethered to the Ransom Hall television during their entire shift Saturday.

Like all students here, they had something in common with Kalpana Chawla, but the Indian desk clerks share a homeland with the fallen alumna-astronaut.

"When she went into space the first time, she became a household name in India," said Shammaa, a computer science graduate student. "She made history and is an inspiration to many Indians."

While her loss — and the loss of six others — this weekend in the Columbia Space Shuttle re-entry breakup was met with sorrow

campuswide, the tragedy weighs especially heavily on the university's sizable Indian population.

As they watched news coverage of debris wreckage Saturday afternoon, the two Ransom employees sought a way to express their grief.

They designed a condolence card bearing the shuttle mission's logo and set it in the computer lab for visitors to sign. The first page was filled within an hour. Four days and 20 sheets later, the expression of sorrow continues.

"We thought about this and wanted to do something to show our admiration," said Divekar, a computer science graduate student from Bangalore. "We wanted to do something to express our heart."

The sheets will be sent to the university's Aerospace Engineering Department and eventually forwarded to Chawla's family in Karnat.

For many of the university's 1,238 students

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The Shorthorn's Braden Aabo

Chemistry graduate student Helen Lu watches NASA's memorial service for the seven astronauts on a projection screen in Nedderman Hall on Tuesday afternoon. Lu said she wanted to pay her respects to the crew.

ALUMNI

Army general under investigation

Recent charges filed against Tommy Franks are not expected to hurt his career, an official says.

BY PAULINE JELINEK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An investigation into allegations that Army Gen. Tommy Franks allowed his wife to attend classified briefings won't affect Franks' ability to lead a U.S.-led war against Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Tuesday.

Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news con-

ference that Franks, a UTA alumna, had his complete confidence and the complete confidence" of President Bush.

"There isn't a chance in the world that it will have any possible interference with his role as the combatant commander in the Central Command," Rumsfeld said. "Tom Franks is doing a superb job for this country, and we are lucky to have him there. He is a man of great talent and skill."

The Defense Department declined to give details of the investigation. But officials speaking on the condition of anonymity said the inspector general has been looking into allegations that

Franks allowed his wife, Cathy, to attend classified briefings, gave her a military bodyguard she was not entitled to and may not have properly reimbursed the government for all of her travel when she accompanied him on official trips.

The charges were not expected to derail Franks' career, and it was unclear what, if any, disciplinary action might follow if the allegations proved true.

Rumsfeld's comments Tuesday echoed a statement he issued late Monday praising Franks' performance as a soldier and commander and pointing out his importance to the war on terror and any upcoming campaigns.



Tommy Franks, U.S. Army general, is under investigation for allowing his wife to attend classified briefings.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Drug legalization forum focuses on education

Former Dallas Cowboy Mark Stepnoski

speaks about his belief that drug prohibition should be abolished Tuesday night at the Stu charts for Sensible Drug Policy Educational Forum in the University Center Rosebud Theatre.



The Shorthorn's Casey Horn

About 100 people attend the event, which featured former Dallas Cowboy Mark Stepnoski.

BY CANDACE SWEAT
Contributor to The Shorthorn

George McMahon sat in front of the University Center Rosebud Theatre on Tuesday, a can of marijuana cigarettes in hand. He says he is one of five medical marijuana patients in the United States.

McMahon joined former Dallas Cowboy center Mark Stepnoski for a "Just Say Know" forum sponsored by Students for Sensible Drug Policy.

Speakers during the forum included the former football player, a former head of the Dallas Drug Enforcement Agency, a Fort Worth police officer and McMahon.

Melissa Milam, founder and president of the campus chapter, said the forum's main goal was to educate.

"If most people knew about the damaging effects of the drug war, the U.S. would not have some of the problems we do," the broadcast communications senior said.

Milam said the chapter's responsibility is to inform the community and motivate people to take action.

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ADMINISTRATION

Budget cuts increase to \$6.5 million

Suggestions for cutting spending include limiting international travel and restricting the summer course schedule.

BY AMBER TAFOVA
The Shorthorn staff

UTA's estimated \$6 million budget cut has risen to \$6.5 million, according to the UT System chancellor's office.

That number may change depending on how UTA's proposal fits with the system's overall agenda, which it must submit to Gov. Rick Perry by Thursday, said Monty Jones, UT System Public Affairs associate director.

"Until we have a final report, that is still a proposal," he said. "There could be some adjustments on how to get to the number, and the actual number may be adjusted."

The package the system turns in to the state Thursday will detail how each university will contribute to a \$104 million systemswide budget cut.

Each of the 15 system campuses submitted proposals Friday. Jones said this allowed each campus to have a degree of flexibility in the proposals before system officials take over.

The systems budget department will analyze the individual proposals and make adjustments to fit into the systemswide plan before sending it to the state, Jones said.

"The priority for the system is to minimize the affect the budget changes will have on student services," he said.

UTA's Finance and Administration and Provost

BUDGET continues on page 5

Student Expression

Administrators should allow students to design and build a memorial to the fallen astronaut

EDITORIAL ROUND-UP

The Issue: Kalpana Chawla, a 1984 alumna, died along with six other astronauts. The university is in an interesting position. It must build a memorial capturing the essence of how Chawla was and how she contributed to UTA. Officials are looking into ways to memorialize her experience at UTA.

Saturday's Columbia Space Shuttle accident was a loss for NASA and UTA. Mission specialist Kalpana Chawla, a 1984 alumna, died along with six other astronauts.

The university is in an interesting position. It must build a memorial capturing the essence of how Chawla was and how she contributed to UTA. Officials are looking into ways to memorialize her experience at UTA.

Instead of only administrators making the decision, students should have the creative control.

Despite budget cuts, the university should fund artistic grant money that would go to the creation of a student-made artistic memorial.

Administrators have done a good job of not hastily jumping to emotional conclusions. There are no plans to name a building after Chawla.

Rumors circulating to that effect are not true. Naming a building would be unreasonable, going against the typical reasoning for doing so. Buildings are usually

named after multi-million dollar donors or presidents who have been around for decades. Names of buildings also lose their meaning over time. Most students do not know who any of the buildings are named after nor do they associate them with any great deed or act.

A memorial to Chawla will be around as long as this university is. There is no reason to rush it.

Chawla is a source of national pride and identity for students across this campus and people across the world.

Students should have a chance to submit what they think her contributions to UTA have been. Letting students create the art with the university funding would produce something with meaning rather than just another campus landmark.

Administrators have a lot to do. While they would oversee any decision-making process, opening that process to students, faculty and staff would give them a chance to show just how much Chawla meant to the campus as a whole.

Beyond

The line between fact and fiction is disappearing



The Shorthorn's David DeGrand

At 7:50 Saturday morning, NASA lost contact with its space shuttle.

A snowball started rolling down a mountainside, and Wolf Blitzer got on a plane. Hurried cell phone calls from East Texas connected witnesses to their families across the country, as people watched satellite television across the world.

Much of what we know of reality relies on a messy network of information gathering and sharing.

Without any physical connection to events, we use different media to provide us with information from across the world. We plug into this network through the phone and cable outlets surrounding us, continuously consuming and producing information as it passes through our minds and into others'.

The space shuttle blazed its way through space and the words of people's mouths. Ground zero was somewhere above East Texas, but the event made its way around the world in an hour, falling in on itself as more and

more information was gathered and dispersed.

A good way to imagine this is to visualize taking a serene lake and dropping a building into it. Information defines our reality. We watch spaceships explode in real life the same place we watch "Star Trek." Train wrecks, wars and other catastrophes fill space on the boob-tube where the talking head and noz. News is a way of gathering and organizing that information for the consumer mind.

The reliance we have on this information is astonishing. The line between fact and fiction is disappearing. Seventy years ago when "War of the Worlds" was played over the radio, people thought it was real. For a short time, people believed aliens were really invading and that the world was really over. People even killed themselves because of it.

We do not know if what we are watching is true. The things that fail to make the news fail to exist. Conflicts of corporate interest push stories aside. CNN fails to speak about news items that would make AOLTime Warner look bad. In the conflict between corporate interest and objectivity, we lose.

In the age of 24-hour news coverage, competition is fierce. Being first

means having ratings, and having ratings means having money. Even if you're not first, cultivating continuing developments in a unique way drives the news coverage far beyond the event. Accuracy is an afterthought.

All of this makes events seem unreal. We are disconnected from the humanity of it all. Body counts are not bloody bodies counted but statistics we read or watch over a bagel and orange juice.

The world is not limited to the geological and educational boundaries it once was. Calling the world a small place does not refer to its geographical size but one's ability to traverse it mentally.

No longer do you have any way to understand the world. News is written, produced and filtered with an eighth grade education in mind.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by this. The solution lies in a diversification of news and information sources. Instead of just watching the news, pick up books or magazines about an issue. Form your own opinion and view about what happened and why. Reality is out there, you just have to look past your remote control to find it.

—Jeremy Hollinger is a philosophy junior and The Shorthorn opinion editor.

Bittersweet Memories

Chawla touched the hearts of those who met her

GUEST COLUMNIST

I didn't feel the blast Saturday morning. Nothing rattled in my small apartment, but something made me get up early. It was a quarter past eight when I turned on the morning television news. I didn't move from that spot for hours. All I could think of as I watched the Columbia Space Shuttle was, "I hope Kalpana Chawla was not among the crew."

Five minutes later — an eternity — the telephone rang. It was a reporter from the Arlington Star-Telegram. He was calling to ask me about my interview with Dr. Chawla.

Reluctantly, I asked him, "Was she in the shuttle?" "Yes," he answered. "She was a great person," "She was a good mother and wife," "He was always active in the community."

As I watched people speak of Chawla, I knew that certain comments were sincere. In the short time I spoke with her, I remember my impression of her.

She was so eager and excited to talk. Through the entire interview she would constantly go back to describing how beautiful her first space experience was. She spoke of the awe-inspiring views of the oceans and the continents.

As I watch professors speak of her love of education and students speak about the lasting impressions she made when she returned to visit UTA, I knew their words were sincere.

I knew because I felt the same way when my interview was over. She said she considered herself an explorer and Earth was her campground. She truly did have the heart of an explorer. She even viewed her extensive education as another journey, one without permanent obstacles, only challenges to overcome.

—Marc Barreira is a 2002 alumna.



MARC BARREIRA
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LETTER

Parking problems leave student feeling used

I am writing this letter in hopes that the university will realize the negative impact of their parking policies on the students' perception of UTA.

Last Wednesday, I was issued a ticket for not having a valid UTA parking pass. I had a parking decal clearly displayed in the lower right corner of my windshield. On another occasion, a few years ago, I was issued a ticket for parking behind a parking blockade that was placed behind my vehicle

while I was in Davis Hall. Each one of these instances have created an inconvenience for me. They give me a sense that the university is there to take advantage of me rather than assist me in obtaining an education. The impact of this will be a lack of interest in helping the university when they ask for it.

I know many students have faced these same issues with the parking department. I hope the university staff realizes the negative impact of this on future donations to UTA.

—Tom Kingsley, marketing intern

Shuttle

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Ching Jishi, 2002 alumnus, said the accident should not have happened with the resources available to NASA.

"When you spend millions of dollars, the risk factor should be minimized to zero," he said. "I just can't justify what happened."

Jishi moved from India to earn his bachelor's degree here and said he remembers Chawla as an epic figure of pride in his country. Because Chawla was

from India and part of the space program, everyone there admired her, he said. Chawla was the first native Indian woman in space.

Jishi said his respects to Chawla on Tuesday afternoon at the glass-enclosed memorial in Wood Hall.

Don Wilson, mechanical and aerospace engineering chair, said that like driving a car, going on a shuttle mission is not 100 percent safe — there's an inherent risk that goes along with being an astronaut. Wilson supervised Chawla's master's thesis while she attended the university. She graduated in 1984 with a master's of science in aerospace engineering.

"Obviously NASA has some serious questions to address," he said. "There will be some serious examination."

He urged engineering students to take their work seriously. "Be very thorough and competent in what you do — look for flaws," he said. "The responsibilities are high."

Brian Hodges, computer science and engineer senior, said his design management class used Columbia as part of an ethics discussion Tuesday. Without knowing the cause of the disaster, the

MEMORIAL SERVICE

The College of Engineering will have a memorial service for alumna Kaplana Chawla at noon today in the Nodderman Hall atrium. The college will name a scholarship in her honor. Chawla died along with six other astronauts when her shuttle broke apart over North Texas.

class still addressed job responsibilities — when to break the chain of command to report a potential problem.

Another source of financial support can be found through one-time funds. One-time funds are found through salary savings and are applied to special projects.

"When employees leave positions, they are not immediately replaced, and the search may take a few months. UTA is able to add that employee's salary to one-time funds," Dunn said.

Dan Williams, senior vice president for finance and administration, said the proposal

"I believe you have the ethical responsibility to do anything you can to solve a problem," he said. Engineering professor Don Smith said there are trade-offs concerning the design of the shuttle and the work put into it. He said NASA can never assure a perfect mission but thinks the association will have continued success in the future.

"I think it's phenomenal with the safety record they have," he said. "Think of all the things that could go wrong."

AMBER L. TAFOVA
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also includes a total of about 84 million in student fees, maintenance cuts and a flexible hiring freeze.

The university expects to find \$700,000 from the hiring freeze, he said. The university will get final directions from Perry after the proposals are in, he added.

"We don't go through this every year," he said. "It's hard to say what will happen."

AMBER L. TAFOVA
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Amendment.

Stepnoski, the current president of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws, spoke about what he calls ineffective ways the government educates young people about drugs. He said he wants to get the truth out to them.

"When I began supporting drug legalization," he said, "I was accused of being a 'poor role model.'"

CANDACE SWEAT
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Students

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from the Asian subcontinent, Chawla was a free runner on the path they would later take to study here. When she arrived in Arlington in 1982 to pursue a master's degree, there were fewer than 100 Indian students. Said International Office Director Judy Young.

Indians now comprise more than 40 percent of the university's nearly 2,800 foreign students, and many of Chawla's countrymen pursue an engineering track, as she did.

"She did things in a different way," said Eshwarth Narayana, a computer science senior from Kerala. "She wasn't the typical Indian girl."

In a predominantly Hindu society in which women typically play a traditional house-maker role, Chawla set a course that would take her to her doctorate at The University of Colorado in 1988 before joining NASA in 1994.

"She started with little and reached such meteoric heights," Shamma said. "She had her own dream. She is admired by many Indians."

But to Divakar, the biggest tragedy of her death lies, partly in the name of shared nationality, but more in human terms. "One thing I tell people is that apart from her being an [alumna] or being from India, she was one of the seven best people in the world — the crème of society," he said. "That is the worst thing."

BRAD ROLLINS
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Budget

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offices worked with faculty and staff to find the cuts Gov. Rick Perry told state agencies to figure out by the end of this week.

This was in response to a \$1.8 billion deficit and the 7 percent state budget cut ordered by Gov. Rick Perry on Jan. 24.

A 7 percent reduction means the university had to cut \$6.5

million from state funds awarded for this fiscal year, which ends in August. The state comptroller predicts a \$9.9 billion state shortfall if budget cuts are not made for next session.

Dana Dunn, vice president for academic affairs, said the Provost office proposed restrictions on international travel and summer classes to balance the budget.

Dr. Dunn said exact figures are not ready and that budget proposals will be public once accepted by the state.

Fewer than 10 percent of summer courses will be cut, Dunn said.

"We did modest trimming of the summer schedule at the margins so it would not affect students' ability to make progress for their degrees," Dunn said.

Another example of budget cuts on the academic side is a delay of a recently approved master's in communication degree.

"Once the budget goes through, we will go forward with the plans," Dunn said.

Drug

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"Texas is \$10 billion in debt, and education budgets are being slashed," she said. "There is something fundamentally wrong when prison comes before education."

Members of the organization set behind a table full of shirts, books and posters with statements like "War on Drugs: Prison for the Poor, White House for the Rich" and illustrations of Pres-

ident George W. Bush sporting cocaine with the word "heroin" at the bottom.

"The drug war is a lost cause," nursing sophomore David Hargrove, who says he has studied the drug war for a long time, said. "The government is fighting a multi-billion dollar industry."

About 100 people, from young adults to senior citizens, filed into the auditorium, which seats a little more than 400.

McMahon began the forum by describing his 1988 diagnosis of Nait-Pitelis Syndrome, which he

claims was previously treated with ineffective drugs.

He applied to the National Institutes of Drug Abuse and the Food and Drug Administration to become one of the original 15 patients who would receive legal marijuana treatment.

"I receive the marijuana for pain, nausea and spasms," McMahon said.

He receives 300 marijuana cigarettes a month and is prescribed to smoke up to 10 a day.

Though his situation is rare, he said he and his wife, Mar-

garet, have the ultimate goal of helping change laws that make the drug illegal.

Hosurd Woodbridge spoke on prohibition and police exploitation of rights.

"Law enforcement has been charged with the impossible task of protecting citizens from their own mistakes," the former Fort Worth police officer said.

He included in his speech "tips" to avoid becoming a "victim" in the drug war, such as knowing what one's rights are based on the Fourth

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