

SPOTLIGHT: FORENSICS

Professor raises the bar for students

By Alicia Bayat
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Everyone watches CSI or some type of crime show and decides they want to be a crime scene investigator. But where do they go? What's the first step?

Well the first step is to be clear that real forensics investigations are not easy and not glamorous. There are no short cuts to gathering evidence and by the end of the day the crime will not necessarily be solved.

"Forensic science is the application of science and the law. Different areas are applied to solve problems on a scientific basis," said Dr. Khalid Lodhi, the director of the Forensic Science program at Fayetteville State University.

Dr. Lodhi said you can "Google" and find hundreds of forensic programs online, but what makes FSU's program unique is simply that the faculty members who are teaching the program are experts in their areas.

The forensics program at FSU tries to assure that students understand priorities, limitations, sources and resources, said Dr. Lodhi. "Sometimes it takes a year average before results and criminal prosecution."

The emphasis is on the importance of learning quality skills from experienced professionals with the proper equipment. In the past three years, Dr. Lodhi has brought technology to FSU comparable to anything used throughout the world.

The biggest advantages of the program are the small classes, state of the art equipment and hands on labs. All these things give students the unique experience to be able to compete in society for high quality jobs as experts in their field.

Students are taught the importance of handling evidence and learning how to hone those skills.

Dr. Lodhi points out that there are three major problems to consider. It's important to realize that crime scenes are not pristine. So what you see on television is not exactly a reliable depiction of the challenges forensic investigators must face. Another important challenge is that most of the time there is not enough of a sample. In order to test a sample it must be destroyed. Therefore it has to be handled properly and carefully. He also noted that criminals and crime scenes are and can be mobile.

Students are also taught the importance of credibility, integrity and professionalism.

"Credibility and integrity are the most important in any field, but most important in the forensic field. If you make a mistake never try to cover it up," advises Dr. Lohdi. "It will come out. Once your credibility is lost it cannot be recovered."

Public Transportation

The good, the bad and the *FAST*

By Alicia Bayat
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Every morning many Fayetteville residents get up early and begin their day. For many people that usually may mean a 10 or 20 minute drive to work. But for many other Fayetteville residents that means getting up earlier to stand at a bus stop and wait. That may turn into a one to one-and-a-half hour ride to their destination.

The Fayetteville area is served by the FAST transit system. This system is the main means of public transportation in the Fayetteville area. It is managed by the city of Fayetteville.

Is FAST a good alternative means of transportation? Is it economically effective? Is it efficient? Is it safe? Curiosity led me to explore those questions. I decided to find out. For two months I used the FAST transit system as my primary means of transportation. I learned all the routes. I used the system for everything from going to class, appointments, shopping to visiting with friends. Along with realizing the seats are not made for sitting on too long this is what I learned.

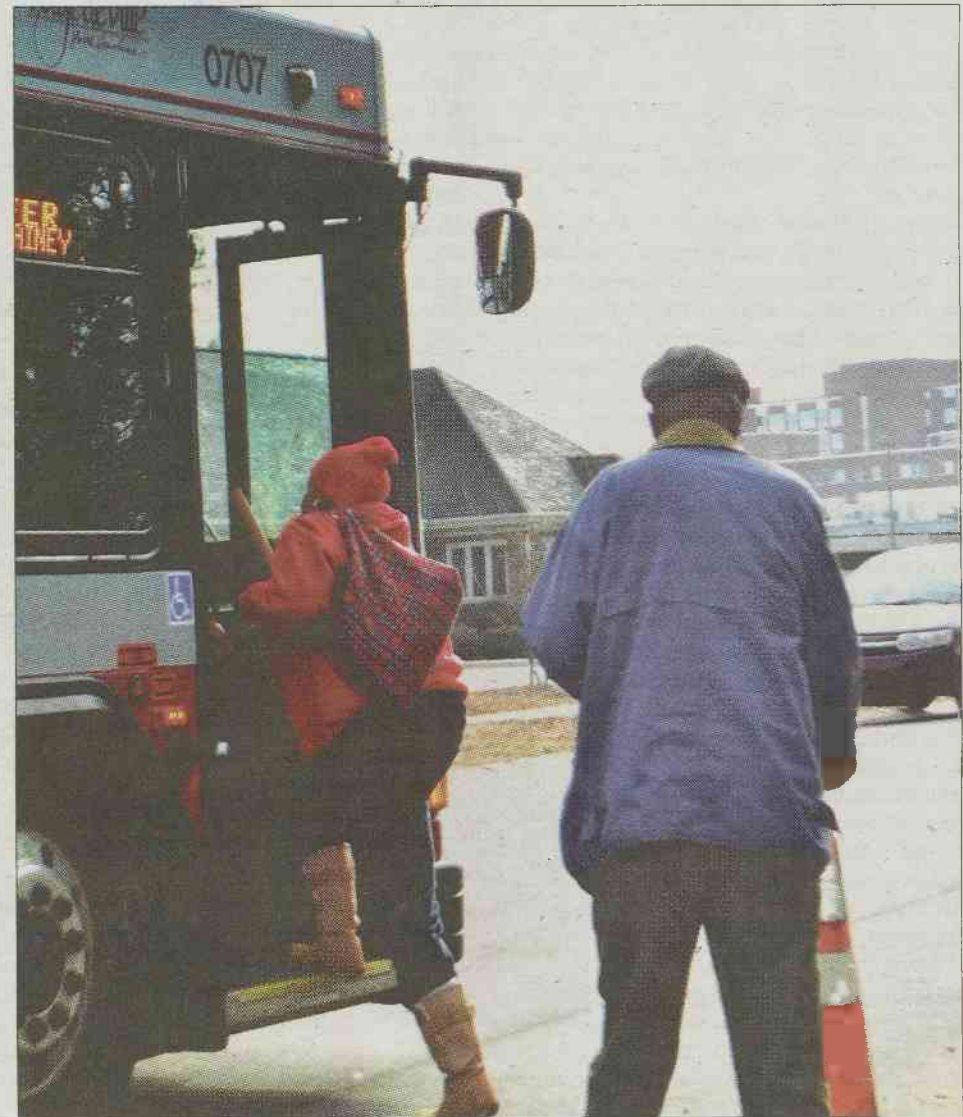
The system has a couple of benefits, for example it is a good economic choice as a means to travel in a time when gas prices are skyrocketing. The growing population of Fayetteville also means a growing number of cars on the road to contribute to traffic congestion. Utilizing the public transit system helps to cut back on transportation expenses. It also helps to cut back on getting stuck in traffic or having to maneuver through traffic during busy hours.

The downside to public transportation becomes clear almost immediately. Although five new hybrid buses were introduced in December the incidence of mechanical issues are continuous. In several instances, buses were stranded or had problems starting during their routes, emergency alarms went off alerting drivers of mechanical issues. The most difficult part is the effect it has on passengers when buses get stranded or will not start and passengers are relying on this service for their livelihood.

The time between when mechanics are called to verify the situation and get passengers going seems to add another hour or so to your commute.

Another important aspect to add is that the routes are sporadic. Bus times are inconsistent and inconvenient. It seems inconceivable that one connecting route will end at 10:50 p.m. but since other routes that may get you home closed down at 7:20 p.m. There is not a route that will actually get you home. It leaves you at the mercy of the public transit system and their time schedules. For a system that so many rely on for their transportation needs, it seems an irrational route schedule.

The routes are limited and connections



Voice photo by Alicia Bayat

Fayetteville passengers board FAST bus 15 on a cold weekday afternoon.

into other suburbs are nonexistent.

Many buses run every 30 minutes while other's run on the hour. At times they may arrive 10 or 15 minutes early and if you miss that bus then you will be left to wait another hour for the next bus to come along. Sometimes you are left at the mercy of the elements.

Then there is the issue of no service on Sundays. Although many businesses are closed there are many that are not. This leaves many people trapped at home or, as one passenger pointed out, she can't work on those days or go anywhere unless she wants to walk.

During the ice and snow storm this winter the system shut down quickly. Some passengers complained about being stranded on the third day as the system went on-line and off-line within the first early morning hours realizing that the roads were still too slick to maneuver.

There is also the issue of safety. The transit system clearly has a system of guidelines in which to protect passengers and drivers. In many instances drivers seemed confused

about procedures. In one instance when a passenger was clearly harassing and threatening other passengers she was allowed to continue. When the incident turned into an all out fight the driver was slow to act, leaving passengers to fend for themselves and run for cover.

The driver didn't toss the woman off the bus after she had already threatened and harassed several passengers, not even after she started the fight. He still didn't remove or ask her to leave the bus after she began threatening two thirteen year old girls. When the police finally arrive, they only questioned the driver who blamed it on the two men who had left the bus. When it was clear a lot of this could have been avoided had the instigator been thrown off the bus initially instead of being allowed to roam at will.

For the most part the drivers seemed very conscious of road conditions and speed limits, but there was that one trip I will never forget as the driver took every turn as if she were a professional race car driver. The

see *FAST*, page 12