Sluggish Arizona hands Saint Louis 33-point loss — PAGE 9

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Future of food may be in genes

BY NATE BUCHIK
Staff Writer

Most people have eaten genetically modified food and don't even know it.

The current debate on genetically modified plants and the history of this little-understood science was outlined last night at a faculty lecture given by plant sciences professor Vicki Chandler.

Chandler works with a team of 16 at the UA, researching gene regulation and specifically studying the more than 50,000 genes of corn.

During the last 50 years, the world has produced four times the amount of food that was grown in the first half of the century, with no increase in lands devoted to agriculture.

"There's a challenge to increase crop production without further degrading the environment," Chandler said.

One proposed solution is to grow more genetically modified food.

But genetics is not a science that is fully understood. More research about genes and their functions is key to making better genetically altered food.

The argument against genetically engineered food cites food safety issues, environmental issues, economic issues and ethical issues.

Chandler used the example of corn to explain how all plants can be genetically engineered, and have been for several years.

One engineered gene from another plant or from anything with genes can be added to the corn's genome, or its entire genetic makeup, to give it additional nutrients or kill insects that may try to eat the crop.

This altering of plant genes has been going on with plant breeding by farmers for 10,000 years, Chandler said.

Engineering of plants may have monumental effects across the world

See **GENES,** Page 6

DAVID HARDEN/Arizona Daily Wildcat

Got a light, buddy?

A "Cirque" performer heats things up during the opening performance of the show's run at Centennial Hall last night. "Cirque" features French cirque tradition with human acts such as contortionism, trapeze artists and musclemen. The show runs through Dec. 8. For a complete feature on "Cirque," check out GoWild in tomorrow's *Arizona Daily Wildcat*.

Classroom cleaning cut back

Janitors will clean classrooms less frequently, so facilities management asks students to tidy up after selves

BY JAMES KELLEY
Staff Writer

UA students are going to have to start picking up after themselves.

Recent budget cuts have forced a cutback on the number of days per week janitors will be cleaning classrooms and off-campus offices.

Joel Valdez, senior vice president for business affairs, wrote in a memo to deans, directors and department heads last week that because of a more than $6 million, or 17 percent, reduction in Facilities Management's budget since July, custodial services would be cut back.

State legislators cut $18 million more from the UA budget last week.

Beginning Monday, classrooms will be cleaned three days per week instead of five.

But this announcement doesn't automatically translate into more layoffs. Custodial employees will still work 40 hours per week, however, they will now be working four 10-hour days per week rather than five 8-hour days.

On Jan. 6, UA property located off-campus, or about 150 buildings, that had been cleaned at least once a week will be cleaned bi-monthly, said Chris Kopach, associate director of Facilities Management, which oversees custodial and operations services.

The department has been hit with cuts before.

Forty-nine percent of full-time custodial services jobs have been cut in the past two years.

Now, Facilities Management will be more dependent on students and faculty to keep the classrooms clean.

Because buildings will be cleaned less often, "Facilities Management will need the cooperation of all students and professors by following the 'no food, no drink' policy in all classrooms," Valdez stated.

Facilities Management recently took photographs of classrooms to see if the policy was being followed.

See **MAINTENANCE,** Page 8

Bioscience specialties may double federal grants

BY CYNDY COLE
News Editor

The UA's involvement in the burgeoning biosciences sector would mean the university could net nearly twice as much in federal research grants, build more research laboratories and specialize in neurological sciences, cancer therapies and bioengineering, according to a report released yesterday.

The UA and other Arizona universities are lagging behind other states in biotechnology research, and consequently, research grants, the report stated.

But with investment and growth in the biosciences field, which encompasses life-related sciences ranging from organic chemicals and pharmaceuticals to physicians' work and researchers' discoveries, Arizona's three public universities could bring their shared National Institutes of Health revenues up from $117 million in 2001 to $214 million by 2007.

Right now Arizona is 28 percent less involved in biosciences than other states, and Arizona's universities rank 27th in the nation in NIH funding grants, though the NIH's budget has doubled in the last five years, said Walter Plosila, vice president for public technology management at the Battelle Memorial Institute, which drafted the report.

One goal is to get Arizona's universities into the ranks of the top 10 states in NIH earnings.

The report was commissioned by the Flinn Foundation, a philanthropic organization, and is a blueprint that administrators say will work for Arizona's — and the UA's — future in biotechnology.

"I think this was an excellent road map of where we need to go on this university campus, let alone statewide," Graduate College Dean Gary Pivo said yesterday at a meeting where the study's findings were released.

With the help of the state-based Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen), which was designed to turn research discover-

See **BIOTECH,** Page 6

Bioscience Applications

- Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson' s disease
- Epilepsy
- Rehabilitation
- Anti-cancer drugs
- Pancreatic cancer
- Colon cancer
- Environmental links to cancer
- Imaging and diagnostics
- Implants
- Prosthetics
- Robotic symptoms
- Anthrax, plague and other pathogens
- Plant vaccine development
- Valley Fever
- Crop development
- Asthma
- Diabetes