

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS



Associate department head of geosciences George Gehrels discusses the recent discovery by UA scientists that the Himalayan mountain range is part of a 500 million-year-old mountain system.

UA profs locate ancient peaks

By Ashley Nowe
STAFF WRITER

UA scientists have discovered that the highest mountains on Earth actually sit atop another mountain range that is nearly 10 times older.

The Himalaya Mountains of Nepal, India and Bhutan, were originally thought to stand alone at the age of 55 million-years-old, created when India crashed into Asia, but new discoveries show that the mountain range is part of a 500 million-year-old mountain system.

The discovery leads scientists to believe that this newly discovered ancient mountain range came about when India collided with a still unknown landmass to the north.

"This really leads to the question of what the world looked like 500 million years ago," said George Gehrels, associate department head and professor of geosciences.

It is theorized that 450 to 500 million years ago, rocks in the Himalayas were pushed down below Earth's crust and were

changed by the heat. The deeply imbedded rocks were brought back to the surface by processes such as erosion caused from weathering and the formation of fault lines, Gehrels said.

"What we are seeing is the roots of this earlier mountain formation," said UA geosciences professor Peter DeCelles. "The new mountain range is still being pushed up even today."

The ancient findings are significant not only because of their age, but also because it causes scientists to rethink the global climate change and the shift in seawater composition, Gehrels said.

The Himalaya Mountains shed enormous amounts of sediment that flow from the river systems into the oceans, which causes carbon dioxide loss in the atmosphere and in return cools Earth's climate.

Taking away carbon dioxide is like taking a blanket off of Earth," Gehrels said. "It causes the entire Earth to get a whole lot cooler."

Though it may not feel cool, the fact is that during most of Earth's history there were no polar ice caps, DeCelles said.

The eroded sediment that is swept away by systems like the Indus River and the Ganga River flows into the ocean, changing its composition.

"This definitely may have played a role into what is in the ocean," Gehrels said. "We might have found the answer for why earth's climate and sea composition changed drastically at this point in time."

The team of scientists began researching the Himalaya Mountains in 1996, becoming more intrigued after noticing fossils that suggested the mountain chain was older than believed.

The bewildered scientists pieced together the mystery of these aged rocks when results from samples began coming in last year, showing that the mountains were in fact a part of an older mountain chain.

Samples were gathered over the years and then tested by the UA's one-of-a-kind mass spectrometer, a machine that measures the decay of uranium into lead, allowing the age of the tested materials to be revealed.

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Faculty approve threat policy

By Andrea Kelly
STAFF WRITER

A policy on threatening behavior was approved yesterday at the Faculty Senate meeting, less than one month before the anniversary of the nursing school shootings.

The policy was passed as memorial plans are taking shape for the three nursing professors who died on Oct. 28, 2002, at the hands of Robert S. Flores Jr., a student who had made threatening statements.

"Just in time, if I may say so," said Jennifer Jenkins, the senator who proposed the policy.

Saundra Taylor, senior vice president for campus life, also urged the senate to pass the policy.

"We are very, very close," said Taylor. "I am very mindful of the anniversary of the slayings. I would like to endorse it before that date."

The policy will serve as a code for those who are threatened, or observe threats, when reporting the occurrence.

It states that anyone witnessing threats, no matter whom they are directed toward, should leave the area, call the police, and file a report with the Dean of Students office.

If the person reporting the threat is a staff member, the department head must also be notified of the threat.

Students who have made threats could face suspension or expulsion, depending on the

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Procedures for faculty reporting threatening behavior:

- ▶ Leave the area immediately.
- ▶ Call the police by dialing 9-1-1 to request that an officer come to the location.
- ▶ Report the student's threatening behavior to Dean of Students Office by filing a Student Code of Conduct Complaint.
- ▶ Notify supervisor and the dean or department head where the threat occurred.

Student hacks into ILC computers with laptop

By Ty Young
STAFF WRITER

UA officials caught a student hacking into the ILC computer network Friday, gaining access to passwords and e-mail accounts of all those using computers in the center.

The student was using a software program on his laptop to search the network for computers in use. In so doing, he had access to all information on the Integrated Learning Center network, said Mike Bernardo, a senior support systems analyst at the ILC.

The student's unauthorized software program shut down the network, alerting Center for Computing and Information Technology workers and library officials that there was a problem.

When school security officials arrived, the student was still at his laptop, illegally accessing the server, Bernardo said.

Library and CCIT staff members confiscated the laptop and held the student in a meeting room. It was there that the student admitted to using the illegal software that shut down the network, Bernardo added.

Bernardo was one of the staff members who walked in on the

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Man pulls gun on UAPD officer following suspicious activity call

By Ty Young
STAFF WRITER

A Tucson man pulled a gun on a UAPD officer last night, after he fled police who wanted to question him about suspicious activity in the University Medical Center parking lot.

Carlos Leon Santa Cruz, 25, of 771 W. Tennessee St., was first seen looking into parked cars in the UMC parking lot at 5:24 p.m. An employee called UAPD to report the suspicious activity. Two officers at the North Campbell Avenue and East Speedway Boulevard intersection responded, said Sgt. Eugene Mejia, spokesman for the UAPD.

The officer saw the suspect, described as a 20-year-old Hispanic male wearing a cowboy hat, walking down North Campbell Avenue. When the officer approached the man, he ran across the

street and into the Taco Bell parking lot, 1818 E. Speedway Blvd. The officer followed on foot as the suspect ran westbound on Speedway, Mejia said.

When the suspect got to the parking lot outside Dirtbag's, 1800 E. Speedway Blvd., he pulled out a weapon and pointed it at the officer. The officer drew his weapon and told the man to put his weapon down, which he did.

After throwing the gun to the ground, the suspect ran down the alley behind Taco Bell. Another responding officer apprehended him without further incident, Mejia said.

The gun was stolen in Phoenix. The man was charged with aggravated assault and possession of a stolen firearm, both felonies. If convicted, the man may face prison time.

The suspect is being held for questioning. The investigation into suspected car thefts in the area is ongoing.