OU forensics department featured in video project

by Matt Burns
Campus Senior Writer
matthew.burns@ohiou.edu

By the 2006-2007 school year, Ohio University's forensic chemistry department will be recognized in high school classrooms across the country. Video crews from Horizons Companies in Columbus came Friday to tape footage for an instructional video.

The video, which will feature interviews and demonstrations by OU faculty in forensics-related departments, will be titled "What's Chemistry Got to Do With It?" and will be distributed by Glencoe, a division of textbook company McGraw-Hill. This will be part of a series of instructional videos titled "What's Science Got to Do With It?"

For the 2006-2007 school year, all high schools around the country that order McGraw-Hill chemistry textbooks will receive the film, said Jay Hatton, a line producer for Horizons Companies.

On Friday, Hatton and senior producer Chris Webber interviewed four members from the chemistry, biochemistry, biology and sociology departments at OU. Among them were Glen Jackson, assistant professor in chemistry and biochemistry, and Nancy Tatarek, a sociology and anthropology professor.

Hatton said he chose OU as the place to film the video after researching universities across the nation.

"What interested me was the fact that (OU) actually specialized in forensic uses of various equipment they had," he said.

OU is an exception among forensics programs across the nation. The science of forensics focuses on the use of chemistry, anthropology and biology to solve crimes, but the forensics chemistry major offered at OU is rare in universities. Most universities offer their forensics majors through the sociology department.

"We're kind of in a class of our own," Jackson said.

Tatarek, who was interviewed for the video, has taught at OU for less than five years, but worked on more than 20 local forensic cases.

"For my part, the setup was that Chris Webber, the producer, asked me questions about being a forensic anthropologist, about my experiences, and I had some skeleton material out which I talked about in relation to forensics," Tatarek said.

The growth in popularity of forensic science, due to the No. 1-rated television show "CSI" and its spin-offs, might make the "What's Chemistry..." video part of a larger development project.

"Glencoe wanted to take advantage of (the popularity of forensics on TV) and produce a series of forensic-topic videos that could be pulled out of 'What's Science Got To Do With It?' and comprise its own forensic series," Hatton said.

Though the university is not directly benefiting financially from the film, associate professor Jackson said there is a possibility in the future.

"(McGraw-Hill) wanted to compensate us, and we suggested that maybe they donate to the forensic chemistry program," Jackson said.

"Right now it's done in kind, really. It promotes our university, and that's good for us."