



Physical Anthropology Section - 2012

H37 The Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be familiar with the willed body donation program at the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State (FACTS).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the myriad research opportunities FACTS has to offer. FACTS aims to advance the field of forensic anthropology and other associated forensic science disciplines by creating a modern documented skeletal reference collection and providing access to both an osteological laboratory and outdoor human decomposition research facility for forensic scientists to conduct innovative interdisciplinary research in human identification studies.

The Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State (FACTS) established a willed body donation program and an outdoor research facility in April 2008. Both the Forensic Anthropology Research Facility (FARF) and the Texas State Donated Skeletal Collection are available for research use by both national and international scholars. The mission of FACTS is to advance forensic science and anthropology through world-class education, research, and outreach. FACTS will: (1) provide the highest quality education and training for students and professional scientists in forensic anthropology; (2) provide training and certification for the medicolegal community; (3) assist national and international scholars from numerous forensic science disciplines in conducting quality scientific research that will benefit the medicolegal community; (4) facilitate interdisciplinary research and study, including providing state-of-the-art facilities and collections for research that advances forensic anthropology and other forensic sciences; (5) disseminate research in forensic anthropology through peer-reviewed conference proceedings and professional journals; (6) provide technical and scientific expertise and services to law enforcement, the medicolegal community, and the general public; and, (7) build local, national, and international partnerships with law enforcement agencies, laboratories, and research institutes to advance knowledge in forensic anthropology and other forensic sciences that deal with skeletal and decomposing bodies.

The Forensic Anthropology Research Facility is a large outdoor forensic decomposition facility, with 26 acres available for use on the Freeman Ranch. The decomposition facility provides opportunities for researchers to conduct studies that increase the understanding of variables affecting decomposition in climates similar to south central Texas. Longitudinal decomposition data for both human and non-human subjects are currently being collected. In addition, FARF is currently host to several national and international research projects covering the fields of anthropology, entomology, geography, molecular biology, and pathology. Accessibility to a weather station on the Freeman Ranch facilitates collection of weather and environmental data that assists researchers in outdoor studies. Approval for use of FARF requires submission of a research proposal and approval from the Director of FACTS.

The Texas State Donated Skeletal Collection is a growing modern skeletal collection consisting of permanently accessioned donated human remains from FARF research. Although a young center, FACTS has been quickly growing. Anatomical donations per year have risen from three donations in 2008 to 15 donations in 2010. As of July 2011, FACTS has already received 12 donors for the year. To date, there are 78 living donors on file that have willed their bodies to FACTS. The Texas State Donated Skeletal Collection currently has 37 accessioned donors, both males and females, ranging in age from 32-91 years, of African, European, and Hispanic ancestry available for research. Collaboration with other research institutions is an important aspect of FACTS; therefore FACTS has developed policies and data collection protocols that allow researchers to utilize the FACTS collection in conjunction with other similar research facilities and standard osteological databases. The required paperwork for donation includes the basic biological profile, geohistory data, facial photographs, brief medical history, and life history. The data collected by FACTS prior to each donation are available to researchers and national databases. Approval for use of the Texas State Donated Skeletal Collection requires submission of a research proposal and approval from the Director of FACTS.

In addition to collaboration with other decomposition research facilities, FACTS also works with local law enforcement, FBI, and Texas Extension and Engineering Services (TEEX) offering educational lectures and workshops. The opening of a new multipurpose building located on Freeman Ranch will facilitate future workshops designed for the forensic education of graduate students and professionals.

The Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State has immense research and outreach potential as a resource for the medicolegal and forensic science communities. It is important that researchers are aware of the resources available at FACTS and are encouraged to apply for use of the outdoor decomposition facility and/or the skeletal collection.

FACTS, Decomposition, Body Donation