

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Preparations commence for SGA elections

CHRISTINA VEIGA
Contributing Writer

Election time is nearing, but Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama won't be contenders in this race. FIU students will again have the opportunity to try their hand at politics in this year's Student Government Association election process beginning this month.

The race for office begins Feb. 26 when applications are made available for students. In an effort to increase the number of applicants this year, the SGA Elections Committee plans to make the forms more readily available on the first floor of the Graham Center. Applications may also be picked up in the SGA office located in the Graham Center, room 211.

Elections Commissioner Judene Tulloch hopes that an increase in the number of applicants will ultimately increase voter turnout.

According to Tulloch, a good rule of thumb is "if you can vote for it, you can run for it."

But there are still requirements to meet.

Those running for president and vice-president, committee chairs and appointees, or representatives must be FIU students and attend at least 50 percent of classes at the campus they wish to represent, according to the SGA constitution. Students must also have a minimum cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 2.5, and not be under any "academic or disciplinary sanctions." Further requirements include minimum credit hours which vary for graduate, undergraduate, and law students.

It is also important to note that presidential candidates must have held a previous position in SGA for at least two academic semesters, or 154 days prior to running for, or holding office. Also, housing representative must reside on the campus where they are running for office.

Students should submit their applications before March 9 at 5 p.m. in the SGA office.

After verification of eligibility, a candidates meeting will be held March 12 and 13 at 3:30 p.m. to discuss campaign policy. Attendance at one of the meetings is mandatory or candidates will be disqualified.

But it's not all about the candidates since voters are the ones who shape the elections process, according to Alfonso "Alfie" Leon, president of the Student Government Council at University Park. "The whole point of



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

campaigning is so students can bring up issues," Leon said.

Students can bring up these issues at a debate planned for April 9 at 12 p.m. in the Pit. New ideas for parking and transportation, the new Monday-Wednesday-Friday class schedule, and the inclusion of minority students will be among the main issues to bring up, according to Leon. Other important dates to remember for voters and candidates are voting days on April 10 and 11. Traditionally, though, voting days take place during two days on the second week after Spring Break, according to the constitution.

Voting sites are traditionally located in GC, the Green Library, and housing, but

the final locations are still to be confirmed, according to Tulloch. Also to be confirmed is the possibility of online voting through Panthersoft.

"There is definitely a possibility. Worst case scenario, we'll probably begin it in the Fall," said Charlie Andrews, director of Campus Life and Advisor for UP-SGA.

The ballots, created by an outside company called Acceleration, would only allow students to vote for the positions they are qualified to vote for. "From a hacking standpoint, it's actually going to be more secure," Andrews said.

According to Andrews, the possibility

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Maidique hears student complaints

JESSICA SOLIS
Staff Writer

Students stood in line and voiced their various complaints – some personal, others relating to academics – during a Town Hall meeting soon after University President Modesto A. Maidique offered the crowd a glimpse into FIU's future.

To help students get involved in the meeting, the Student Government Council at the Biscayne Bay Campus created a batch of questions that students could ask during the president, but students like senior Julie Ruiz came prepared with their own inquiries for Maidique.

"I want to ask him why some classes aren't offered every semester," she said. "It's hard to graduate in four years when you don't have all the classes."

Students mainly expressed concern about the resources they felt their respective academic departments were lacking and wanted to know what administrators were doing to improve certain services. The president often asked the appropriate administrators what each department was doing to serve its students. At times he answered with a simple "I'll work on it."

Keeping the BBC food court open for longer hours on Fridays and paying the extra \$300 in tuition for online classes were just some of the issues students felt strongly about.

"We have not been funded to do an adequate job in online teaching," Maidique admitted.

Other students wanted to know the current status of the new three-day schedule, which begins Fall semester. Questions were raised about how the new schedule will affect Panther Express shuttle service prices. Maidique then asked students if a weekly bus pass with unlimited rides at a fixed price would be appealing. The audience nodded in approval.

Due to the number of questions regarding the schedule change, Corinne Webb, vice president of Enrollment Services, was asked to explain some of the move's advantages.

"By pushing the schedule out to five days, there will be greater student activity," Webb said. She mentioned that the new schedule will allow for longer business hours for student services such as the food court at BBC, and that the parking situation will be evenly distributed with the new schedule.

Before Maidique answered questions from the audience, he gave a presentation that focused on FIU's immediate and long-term goals, as well as highlighting its previous achievements and how to make the University go from "bigger to better." He also acknowledged BBC's 30th anniversary.

"We have evolved from a small upper division college to a large branch campus," Maidique said of BBC, which is the biggest branch campus in Florida.

Maidique's plan centered on allowing FIU to gain national recognition by strengthening existing programs and creating new opportunities for the school, such as opening new

TOWN HALL, page 4

FIU temporarily escapes tuition increase

NAIHOBE GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

Imagine seeing tuition rise by \$1,000 from one year to the next. In the State of Florida, where average yearly tuition is \$3,326, this would be a 30 percent spike.

Florida has the lowest

public university tuition rates in the nation and earlier this month, Gov. Charlie Crist's budget blueprint for 2007-08 included a no-increase stance on tuition.

Currently, public universities have no say on the tuition they charge undergraduate students. So how is it that

future undergraduates at the University of Florida may stand to pay an extra \$1,000 per year?

Bernard "Bernie" Machen, UF's president, came up with an answer that so far has received the approval of that university's Student Government Association and the

State's Board of Governors. Revenue from what has been named the four-year Academic Enhancement Program, which would charge students \$500 per semester, would be used to hire 200 new faculty and 100 academic counselors.

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THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

MONDAY • FEBRUARY 26

LGBTQ Spiritual Day: 12 p.m., GC 150 (UP)
Panther Rage Meeting: 4 p.m., GC 140 (UP)
Philosophy of the East & West: 7:30 p.m., GC 340 (UP)
SPC General Meeting: 4 p.m., WUC 159 (BBC)
MPAS African American ‘Sankofa’
Exhibition: 10 a.m., WUC Panther Square (BBC)
Hearst Distinguished Lecture Series: 6:30 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

TUESDAY • FEBRUARY 27

Honors Council Society Fair: 11 a.m., GC Forum (UP)
SPC Concerts’ Two Band Tuesdays: 12 p.m., Gracie’s Grill (UP)
Honors Council General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 150 (UP)
SOC Club Fair: 11 a.m., ACI Atrium Area (BBC)
SPC Pan-African – Tribute to Women in Hip-Hop: 7 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 28

SGA General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 150 (UP)
GSA Gradskellers: 6 p.m., Gracie’s Grill (UP)
BBC Career and Internship Fair: 10 a.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)
Panther Power Meeting: 1 p.m., WUC 159 (BBC)
BBC Wishgivers – Casino Night: 6 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

THURSDAY • MARCH 1

PEACE - International Women’s Day: 12 p.m., GC Pit (UP)
Dance Marathon Lip Sync Competition: 8 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)
On-Point Poetry – Poetry Night: 5 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

FRIDAY • MARCH 2

ENGAGE Leadership Workshop: 11 a.m., GC 305 (UP)
National Association of Women in Construction Meeting: 7 p.m., EC 1105 (Engineering Center)
SPC Film – ‘The Last King of Scotland’: 7 p.m. & 10 p.m., GC 140 (UP)
Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro: All Day, Wertheim Performing Arts Center Concert Hall (UP)

SATURDAY • MARCH 3

Dance Marathon: 12 p.m., Pharmed Arena (UP)
Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro: All Day, Wertheim Performing Arts Center Concert Hall (UP)

SUNDAY • MARCH 4

Dance Marathon: 12 a.m. – 12 p.m., Pharmed Arena (UP)
Fourth Annual College of Law Dominos Tournament: 3 p.m., College of Law (UP)

-Compiled by Reuben Pereira

FLEXING



MELINDA BOONE/THE BEACON

PANTHER POSE: Student Ayxa Barbel (right) stretches with an instructor during a yoga demonstration in the Graham Center Pit Feb. 21 as part of Asain Heritage Week. Lessons are also hosted by the FIU Wellness Center. The UP classes are held in the Recreation Center Mondays at 3:30 p.m. and Fridays at 5 p.m.

No enhancement fee for FIU

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The program is estimated to generate \$25 million.

“The notion that UF is significantly under-funded is generally recognized,” Machen said in a student forum held last November.

Howard Rock, a senate member, is among those who believe that the same notion applies to FIU.

“Florida has some of the lowest tuition in the country, which means that we are a seriously under-funded university system,” Rock said. “You get what you pay for.”

In the Jan. 16 Faculty Senate meeting, Chairman Bruce Hauptli reported on his recent visit to Tallahassee for a meeting of the Advisory Council of Faculty Senates.

Among the points discussed was UF’s enhancement fee initiative, something that Chancellor Mark Rosenberg warned representatives from the various state universities about.

Hauptli told *The Beacon* that in his meeting with Rosenberg, the chancellor hinted that, pending legislative approval, universities should be sensitive to their students’ ability to pay the cost of an enhancement fee.

Hauptli reported that the chancellor said that “different institutions need to adopt differing strategies.” He added that some universities should pursue enrollment growth while others should maintain a leveled enrollment.

The latter option describes UF, which is no longer looking to enroll past its approximately 50,000 students.

FIU, on the other hand, listed enrollment growth as its first oper-

ating budget priority for the 2007 legislative session. If its request is approved, FIU would receive \$31.7 million for 1,899 new full-time students.

At the Jan. 16 Faculty Senate meeting, the words “enhancement fee” caught the attention of Senator Rock.

A few weeks later, Rock told *The Beacon* that he had changed his mind about the enhancement fee, though not about the problems that it would help alleviate.

“On second thought, an enhancement fee may not be the way to go

way,” Rock said.

Hauptli shared a similar sentiment.

“We’re getting more money for enrollment growth, but also more students. At one point we become stretched, and the money is not enough extra,” he said. “The new M-W-F schedule will free up a lot of classroom space, but we won’t necessarily have all the instructors to teach in those classrooms. This worries me, and it should worry [students] too.”

Leon echoed Hauptli’s concern over enrollment growth, saying that

FIU would “one day reach a point where it can’t grow anymore.”

Leon was optimistic about the University’s ability to rely on fundraising, while Rock cited

fundraising as ineffective. So with uncertain fundraising capabilities and seemingly disadvantageous effects of sustained enrollment growth, concerns remain about the future of FIU.

“The way to overcome this problem is to raise tuition closer to the national average while also raising need-based scholarships,” proposed Rock. “Then those who can’t pay don’t, but those who can do, and everyone gets a better education.”

Hauptli agreed that the answer may lie in tuition rates.

“Florida is a very cheap state and universities are expensive places to run,” Hauptli said. “In the long-run, Florida’s going to have to come to terms with what it wants to do with tuition.”

Bills allowing Florida universities to charge an educational enhancement fee were simultaneously introduced this month in the Florida House of Representatives and Senate.

Howard Rock, Faculty Senator

Sometime students are so nearsighted that they don’t see the forest, they only see the trees. Last year the library didn’t buy any books because there wasn’t enough money. You can’t run a great university this way.

for FIU,” he said. “But the way it is now, we give money to the students who don’t need it.”

Rock referred to the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, which less than 30 percent of FIU students receive (as opposed to more than 80 percent at UF). He called the program “a middle to higher middle-class entitlement,” where most of the students receiving it have little financial need.

Alfonso “Alfie” Leon, president of the Student Government Council at University Park, Hauptli and Rock all opposed an enhancement fee at FIU, saying it is very unlikely due to the differing economic advantages of UF versus FIU students.

But students should pause before releasing a sigh of relief. “Sometimes students are so nearsighted that they don’t see the forest, they only see the trees. Last year the library didn’t buy books because there wasn’t enough money. You can’t run a great university this

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OPPORTUNITIES



FERNANDO GARCIA/THE BEACON

GET A JOB: The Federal Government Statewide Conference held Feb. 21 in the Graham Center Ballroom was hosted by Career Services to help students find positions with federal agencies. Departments represented included criminal justice, public policy, business, engineering, computer science and health and human services.

Week-long events focus on school diversity

KHADIJA HARRIS
Contributing Writer

In order to represent the diverse community found at FIU, the Student Government Association along with organizations such as Residence Life and Counseling and Psychological Services founded the Peer Educators Advocating Cultural Enrichment group in 2000.

PEACE is run by students trained to be peer educators who advocate a multicultural environment which understands and respects people of various races, physical conditions, religions, national origins, genders, ages and sexual orientations.

In an effort to spread understanding on diversity, PEACE has planned four days of events in both University Park and the Biscayne Bay Campus throughout this week.

The events, called "PEACEs of Culture," will start Feb. 26 and go on until March 1.

Monday's theme will focus on the effects culture has on spirituality. One of the main events will be a discussion called "Spirituality: LGBT Style," a forum

of how one's sexuality has an effect on their spiritual beliefs, and vice-versa. This will take place in the Graham Center, room 150, at 12 p.m.

PEACE also plans to have a spirituality fair from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., as well as a spirituality forum from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in GC 243.

Tuesday's topic for the day is cultural sexuality. A traveling exhibit from the African-American Museum will be on display from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the GC Pit.

On Thursday, an information session on gender, politics and religion will be held from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. in the Pit. The main topic discussed will be women in various leadership roles worldwide. There will be a game show, educational boards, informational flyers, prizes and even food.

"As Senator Hillary Clinton has announced she's running for president in 2008, we thought it would be interesting to reflect the role of women in leadership in the United States and around the world," said Jennifer Camacho, graduate assistant at the Women's Center.

Student elections approaching

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is still being discussed, but a definite decision will be made before candidates begin campaigning.

"The hope would be that we give more of the student body the ability to vote," Andrews said.

Last election year, 1,539 students voted for president and vice-president and 3,187 students voted for representatives-at-large, which is only about 10 percent of the student population, according to Tulloch.

The whole process comes to an end April 12 at 12 p.m. when the winners

are announced in the GC Pit for UP candidates and at the Wolfe University Center for Biscayne Bay candidates.

Leon hasn't confirmed if his name will be on the ballot this year.

"If I'm the best person for the students and the University, I'll do it," Leon said.

SGC-UP Notes

Feb. 21 Call to order: 3:34 p.m., Adjournment: 4:40 p.m.

President (Alfonso "Alfie" Leon):

- Special Presentation: Laura Garcia, USAS [United Students Against Sweatshops]: Want a committee to join our campaign to discover more about Coke allegations and sign a letter that requests information from Coke.
 - Leon: "This would branch off of USAS. We want SGA representation on this committee."

Chief of Cabinet (Larissa Lockett):

- SGA Lecture Series March 12 and 13; we will disclose the lecturers later. They will be at night in the GC Ballrooms.

Speaker of the House (Rocio Perez):

- Feb. 28 - Student Leader Luncheon - Celebration for everything we have accomplished this year. Funds will come out of the SGA Cares Campaign allocation.
- Public Safety Forum next Feb. 28, 1 - 2:30 p.m. discussing burglary and theft, specifically laptop and auto theft.

Student Health Advisory (Rebecca Louisdor):

- Health forum will be next week Tues. Feb. 27 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Elections Board (Judene Tulloch):

- Revisions to elections code are complete. Please review before council next week so you are prepared to vote.
- "As of now, you cannot campaign before April 4. If you do, that is grounds for disqualifications ... Campaigning is promoting yourself as a candidate."

Judicial Board (Kathryn Cubbon):

- Meeting Feb. 10 went well. We were able to complete the revisions to the bylaws. It's 13 pages. We are looking into the best way to promote that to Council.

Absences:

- Jennifer Ruiz (At-large), Mikana Maeda (Architecture), Brian Andino (CHUA), Maria Garcia (Law), Charlene Collazo (Arts & Sciences)

Announcements:

- Diversity Week next week. Many events will occur at this campus and at BBC.

-Complied by Angelina Troff

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JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY



PEDRO CORTEZ/THE BEACON

ETHICAL QUANDARY: Gustavo Gorriti (far left), Jane Bussey (middle left), Edward Wasserman (middle right) and Mario Diamant (far right) made up the panel featured in a discussion Wednesday in the Wolfe University Center Ballrooms about differences in ethical standards of in English and Spanish journalism.

NEWSFLASH

Lecture discusses holistic approaches to communication

Lou Capozzi, communications expert and chairman emeritus of the PRCC group, will be a guest at Biscayne Bay Campus as part of the Hearst Distinguished Lecture Series.

His lecture, "Future of Communications in a Conversation Age," will focus on a holistic approach to communications.

The event will take place Feb. 26 at 5 p.m., in the Mary Ann Wolfe Theater.

Diversity Week held at both campuses

PEACE, an on-campus organization that promotes cultural awareness with be holding their yearly Diversity Week called "PEACEs of Culture from today until Thursday with events in BBC.

A variety of events will be held both at University park as well as Biscayne Bay campus, including a discussion Tuesday, "LBGT 101" from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in WUC 155

An event called "Diversity and Perspective" Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in WUC 253 as well as the play "The Devil's in God's House" at 8 p.m. in the Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre.

-Compiled by Cristela Guerra

Student debt: a growing problem



Commentary

Brent Maximin
SGC-BBC Vice President

Going to college is expensive—really expensive. The tuition seems to go up every year, textbooks seem to release a new edition as soon as the last one leaves the printing press, and of course, the ever growing list of fees.

Even in low-tuition states like Florida, the college experience is becoming less and less accessible to many young people. With federal financial aid taking cut after cut, many students are forced to seek employment as a means of offsetting costs.

According to The Project on Student Debt, an organization that investigates the economic implications of student borrowing, three out of four full-time students have jobs and nearly half of them work more than 25 hours a week.

As a student leader myself, it frustrates me that countless students never

get the chance to be involved on campus because they have to work full-time to pay their tuition.

The way I see it, the country's current administration is seemingly dead-set on making higher education out of reach for the working class, and students who do scrape by are being robbed of their college experience because of it.

For many, a minimum wage job still isn't enough, and students are left to take out loans in order to finance their education, which results in massive debt for several years after graduation.

I myself had no choice but to go that very route.

The non-profit sector suddenly becomes a lot less attractive when the good folks over at Sallie Mae want their \$30,000 back.

With graduates burdened with the task of repaying loans, the very dreams that inspired them to attend college in the first place are now deferred—like purchasing a home or starting a family.

With the cost of a college education

now more like a shackle than a sacrifice, the question is whether or not it's worth it.

Why work so hard and spend so much, just to have a sizeable portion of your post-college income go towards repaying loans?

Frankly, there's not much of a choice anymore. In today's highly competitive job market, a post-secondary degree is practically a basic requirement.

Through the opportunities I've had to interact with other students from around the country, I've realized both how common my story is and how many students face even greater challenges such as juggling classes, a full-time job and a family life, all while depending on borrowed funds to pay for their education.

As an international student, I am neither eligible to vote nor to receive financial aid; and yet in my time with Student Government, I've organized campaigns on both these issues.

They might not affect me directly, but I still recognize the fact that if students don't take a united stance on the issues that affect us, then we will continue to be ignored.

SGC-BBC Notes

SGA- Emergency Meeting
Mon. Feb. 19

President (Camilo Silva):

- Appropriation: That SGA fund the amount of \$1,200 to student organization A.N.S.W.E.R. for conference and protest being held in Washington, D.C.
- Passes, 4-1

New Business:

- Pioneer Winter resigns from his position as clerk of council because of time constraints: "I have meetings every other week."
- Winter sought to be appointed to a new position as Student Union Board chairperson to handle event space usage and advertising for the Wolfe University Center.
- Winter said of the position: "It would enable me to carry out my position duties outside of the meetings. I'd be able to set up my own meeting times."
- Vote: Unanimous decision to appoint Winter to new position.
- Zach Trautenberg: "He has the SGA smarts to do this position."

-Compiled by Jessica Solis

Top athletics, Nobel Prize among Maidique's FIU goals

TOWN HALL, page 1

programs at BBC and increasing the number of international students. In 2015, the University will celebrate its 50th anniversary, and Maidique stated that he would like FIU to achieve certain milestones, especially in graduate and undergraduate research.

"Ninety million in research is not enough," he said of last year's research funding. "By the 50th anniversary, we'll be doing \$250 million worth of research."

He also said he hopes to have a

faculty member win a Nobel Prize by this time.

Maidique then pointed to the University's two biggest acquisitions, the College of Medicine and the College of Law, as instrumental to the future of FIU's success.

"The medical school will transform this university. We will be far more renowned," he said.

Gaining respect in athletics is also a priority for FIU, and although last season's 12-0 losing record put them in last place in the standings, Maidique is optimistic about the football team's future.

"You can only go up from there," he joked, telling the audience he hopes that in the next five years the Golden Panthers can be a top 25 or top 30 team.

Maidique demurred on the possible implementation of a tiered university system that would grant higher funds to universities placed at the top. The proposed system could reduce FIU's funding from the state and remove many of its graduate and doctorate programs.

"We have absolutely no interest in opting in. We already are a research university," he told *The*

Beacon. "I have also said that our goal is to become one of the nation's best research universities."

At the end of the meeting, students like Margarita Portnova thought Maidique did the best he could with the Town Hall meeting.

"Like a good politician, he points you in the right direction," she said. Others still felt frustrations about the University's slow progress.

"Everything that is scheduled for improvement is for two, three years from now. We need more improvements now," sophomore Larisa Odessky said. "That means

three years of bad food, bad security, bad housing."

Vice Provost Damian Fernandez is aware of the frustration students expressed, but stated that because of money issues, upgrading the University's services all at once is easier said than done.

"We cannot control our funding," he told *The Beacon*. "We cannot provide all the services that we would want." Nevertheless, Fernandez thought the Town Hall Meeting achieved its purpose. "It has been very useful because it shows how engaged our students are."

OPINION

C. Joel Marino Editor in Chief • Christopher Necuze Production Manager • Chris Cabral Opinion Editor

Campaigns prove costly for candidates in 2008

Funding system out of control

XAVIER E. MARTINEZ
Contributing Writer

The Federal Election Commission recently reported the 2008 presidential election might be the first ever to reach a billion dollars in expenses. The estimated \$500,000,000 each candidate is expected to spend may limit the field of potential presidential nominees.

"The 2008 presidential election will be the longest and most expensive in United States history," FEC Chairman Michael E. Toner told the *Washington Times*.

Chairman Toner said potential nominees could expect \$100,000,000 in "entry level" costs if they wish to be taken seriously by the press. This prediction caused candidates to reconsider accepting federal election funds, and venture into individual fundraising efforts for their campaigns.

I see several possible harmful effects of privately funded presidential campaigns. Potentially good candidates may be forced out of a race because they lack the fund-raising capacity of their peers.

The obligation to acquire necessary finances may distract candidates from key campaigning events and cause them to focus mainly on raising money.

Most importantly, if politicians receive substantial funding from outside sources, this may interfere with the future president's objectivity. The next administra-

tion may back the agenda of some behind the scene corporation or political group based solely on their financial loyalties.

In 1971, congress established the Presidential Election Campaign Fund to reduce the use of private money in government elections. The fund is a separate account of the U.S. Treasury, which provides eligible candidates financial support for their campaigns. Candidates must agree to abide by national spending limits on their expenses if they wish to receive federal assistance.

The two main candidates in the 2008 presidential race may receive up to \$85,000,000 from the tax-funded program. This system is the most impartial, and offers the best solution to the corruptive effects of private money on politicians.

Nevertheless, the future president of the United States will have to spend way more than \$85,000,000 on his or her campaign.

According to *Washington Post* staff writer Matthew Mosk, in today's political arena potential candidates face far more expenditures than past contenders.

Steve Elmendorf, a deputy campaign

manager in Kerry's 2004 run, said costs are increasing, and candidates are being forced to endure the expense of hiring growing political staffs. Having many employees is a requirement to run a successful campaign.

Television advertisements also account for a large slice of the expenses pie. This election year we will probably see political commercials earlier than usual. If candidates choose to reject public funding, then they will no longer be constrained by state advertisement spending

limits, said New Hampshire political consultant, Tom Rath.

New technology provides politicians an easier, yet more expensive method of reaching voters. Record-breaking investments in Internet operations are expected. Almost every nominee has posted videotaped speeches on his or her web site. Former Senator John Edwards (D-NC) already spent close to \$500,000 on his Internet campaign, according to the *Washington Post*.

If all these expenditures weren't enough, less well-known nominees must try to keep up with semi-celebrity senators such as (D-NY) Hillary Rodham Clinton, (D-IL) Barack Obama and (R-AZ) John McCain. All three have appeared on network television many times, and are expected to be the front-runners in 2008.

One presidential hopeful who fell though the cracks is Senator Evan Bayh (D-IN). He was forced to drop from the presidential race in January of 2007 because he lacked the necessary financial support. "It's a fundraiser for breakfast, then call time. A fundraiser for lunch, then call time. Then a fundraiser reception, and then you can still call the West Coast," said Bayh after his withdrawal.

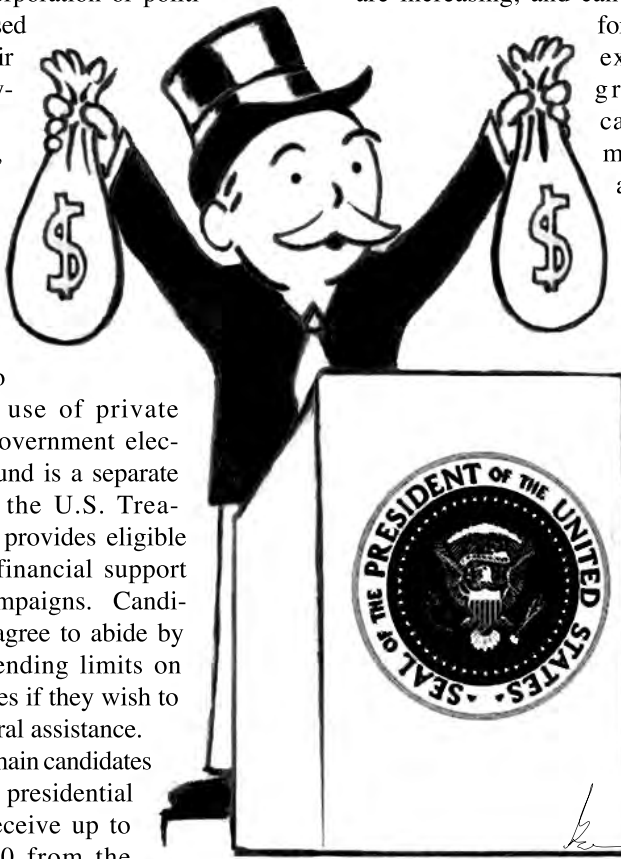
I believe the next president should spend less time fundraising and more time sharing his political strategy with the electorate.

Senator Obama proposed a responsible solution, which I agree with. He's decided to use privately raised funds only for the primaries and caucuses, and adhere to the Federal Election Campaign Fund during the general election.

This will keep fundraising from spiraling out of control and level the playing field for the two nominees.

Obama has begun collecting private donations for his possible general election campaign, but said he will return the money if his opponent agrees to only accept public funding.

The official candidates won't be nominated until next year, so we will see if any much needed changes will be made to this flawed system.



Building a stadium will boost FIU's prestige

JUAN CARLOS CUBA
Contributing Writer

Our University is not a prestigious institution; it never has been. Prestige is an attribute earned, not given, and moreover, it is difficult to obtain.

Proven universities have an unfair advantage – time. Their tradition and reputation have naturally evolved while ours is being artificially accelerated. What took others a century to build, FIU is trying to accomplish in half the time.

Not many people outside of Florida have heard of FIU. When you graduate – when you're looking for a job, a graduate school, a law school, or just conversing – and you tell people where you studied, where you spent a good portion of your life, what do you want them to think? Not indifference and surely not pity. You want their praise and respect. It is a human trait to seek recognition from others, whether you admit it or not.

So, then, when our University is committed to improving their prestige, they are doing us a service. When they build a medical school, build a law school, invite the Dalai Lama, or build a new stadium, it is not just for

their vanity, but also for ours.

Granted, they might be getting ahead of themselves. The football team played hard, but had nothing to show for it. Next year might be better or it might not. But how do you improve? Do you reject a proposal to build a new stadium and implicitly inform all prospective recruits that the administration, the student body and the University has lost hope in FIU's athletic endeavors?

It is a daffy phenomenon, but the quality of a university is not judged solely on their academic performance, but also on their athletic championships. The college sports phenomenon has gripped America's attention and a college's athletic success not only attracts prospective students, but also improves the value of your degree and inspires loyalty in current students and alumni. It improves student life and the overall quality of the "college experience".

College is expensive, but it's an investment. It is an investment in your future – in yourself – whether you're attending to improve your market value, to hone your intellect, or improve your social skills. The more prestigious the university becomes, the more professors, athletes and students they attract.

It allows the administration to

be more exclusive in their selection, allowing them to choose the best students – the ambitious, the qualified, not the ones using college as an interlude between high school and life.

We have a ridiculous advantage over other colleges – we live in Miami. The national consensus is that we live in a tropical paradise. All the administration needs to do is to let America know FIU exists. Let it be known that going to college in Miami doesn't have to cost \$13,000 a credit.

Ultimately, for those of us already attending FIU, the benefits of building a new stadium may not immediately affect us, but know that FIU has shown the commitment to become a top-tier school and I'm impressed at their resolve and their ambition.

Before we revolt against a possible raise in tuition, why not remember at what price you're receiving an education by an underappreciated, underpaid and extremely qualified set of professors.

Know that you're studying to earn a degree from a university that is striving for respect and recognition, just like the rest of us. I can only hope that the administration is not discouraged by the instinctive human reaction against a raise in price.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should FIU renovate the football stadium?

- Yes – football should be a top priority!
- Yes – Our stadium is ugly.
- No – I hate football - Cricket is where it's at.
- No – We don't need to. It's a waste of resources.

Cast your vote at www.beaconnewspaper.com

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Letters to the Editor must be dropped off at GC 210 at University Park, WUC 124 at the Biscayne Bay Campus or sent to beaconopinion@yahoo.com. Letters must adhere to a maximum of 300 words. Letters must include the writer's full name, year in school, major/department and a valid phone number for verification purposes. *The Beacon* reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and/or spacing constraints.



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UNDER the KNIFE

YOUNG ADULTS CONSIDER COSTLY, RISKY SURGERIES

EDDITH SEVILLA
BBC Asst.

Growing up, FIU alumna Jessica Lopez was not too fond of the birthmark on her forehead.

"I was a little bothered by it because a lot of people always asked me what it was," Lopez said.

When she had the birthmark on her forehead removed four years ago, she didn't have to spend a single dollar.

"The insurance covered it because it was really a medical procedure," Lopez said. "The doctor wanted to do a biopsy to make sure it wasn't cancerous so it was removed."

With the popularity of cosmetic surgery among our generation, some have found that plastic surgery and similar procedures come with a significant cost. According to statistics posted on the American Society of Plastic Surgeons website, Americans spent approximately \$9.4 billion dollars on surgical and minimally invasive cosmetic procedures in 2005.

"I would consider plastic surgery if I had the money to do it. I would get my nose done and I would get rid

of this mark," says Dorca Castillo, an assistant manager at a private medical facility, while pointing at a dark spot on her lower lip.

Because of the demand for beauty and youth among men and women, there are now numerous alternatives to surgery. Botox, Restylane, permanent makeup and injections to dissolve fat are some of the services available to those who may not want to go under the knife.

Castillo, who had her eyebrows permanently tinted 4 years ago, goes back to get them redone every few years because of a childhood accident.

"I don't do it to follow what the media says [about beauty]," she said. "I do it to cover up a scar that resulted from a fall as a kid because I didn't get stitches as I should have. I also barely have eyebrow hairs and, in my opinion, eyebrows have high value on a woman's face."

With the media portraying a perfect image of what the female body should look like, some people such as Dionne Stephens, associate chairperson of the FIU Psychology Department, believe that women associate popularity and

success with society's ideals of beauty, especially the women who live in Miami.

"Physical attractiveness has been identified as an important measure when looking at idealized women," Stephens said. "Our popularity and success is closely associated with our ability to meet society's beauty ideals. Miami, in fact, is one of the most popularized cities for having beautiful, young, sexy women. It is of no surprise the show 'Nip/Tuck' is based here."

However, alternative facilities, such as Radiance Medspa in Miami, promote the importance of health and beauty by offering non-invasive beauty procedures for both men and women.

"If you see the movement from the last 20 to 30 years, people are looking after themselves - they want to look better and they want to feel better, too," says spa owner Dipak M. Parekh. "So those movements really started in this country and I think it's a good thing. If you look at the smoking rates in the older population it's going down so I

SURGERIES, page 9

Outsider finds joy as 'rock star'



But I was singing loud, and most singers weren't singing loud.

-Little Richard

He can't play an instrument or carry a tune, but Brian Offenther is a rock star.

His figure is instantly recognizable as he struts his way through his alma mater, the University of Florida: a lanky frame topped by an excess of frizzy curls; buggy eyes hidden behind rhinestone-covered shades; shoes splotted with marker doodles.

Wherever he goes, students stop him to find out what his plans for the night are, who he's currently dating or why he chose to wear that pink beanie.

"Wow, I don't even know who that was," Brian mutters after his latest female fan pays tribute near the UF library's exit.

Since he moved to Gainesville in 2003, the wiry Jewish boy from South Florida has done everything from designing his own clothes to reporting for various local newspapers to deejaying parties. In his free time, Brian likes to travel, taking what he calls "Weekend Adventures" around Central and North Florida and sometimes out of state.

If he's not volunteering at a shelter, dabbling in radio or hosting a mock talk show, Brian likes to watch rock documentaries or concert films of artists as varied as The Sex Pistols, Roy Orbison or Jimi Hendrix.

And everywhere he goes, he is recognized, and if not loved, at least admired.

"I'm looking for something really big," he says of his goal in life.

Brian's been saying this for a long time now. We've been friends since high school and have continued throughout college - I even make it a tradition to visit him in Gainesville at least once a semester.

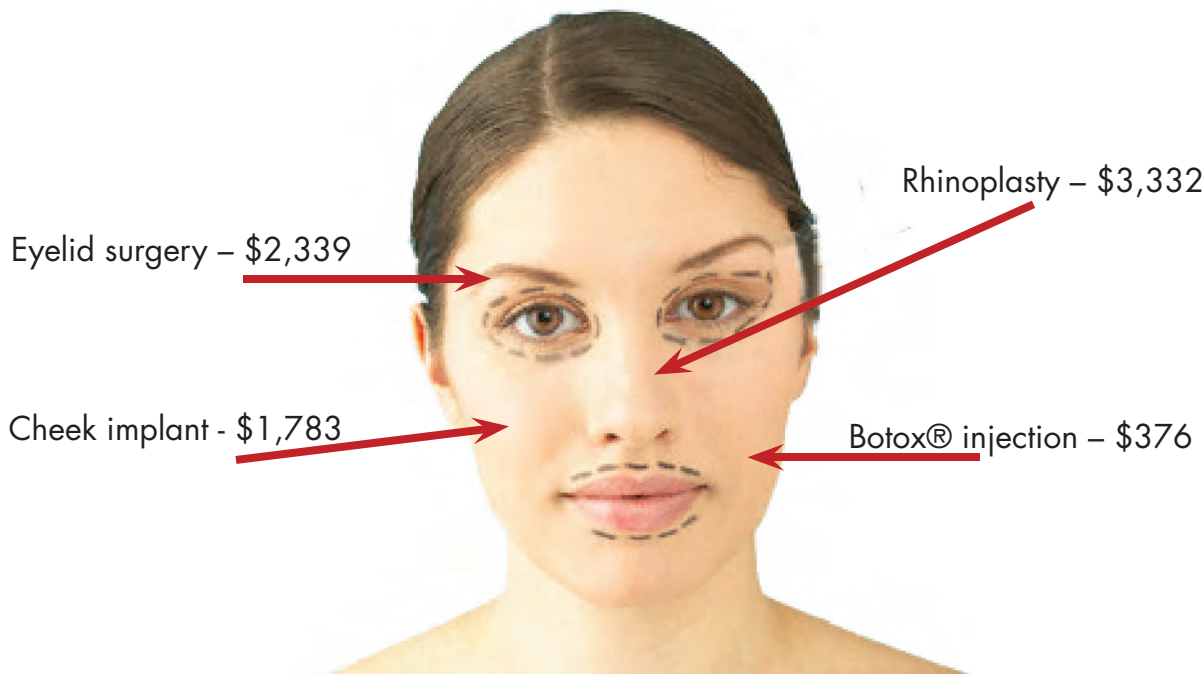
But my memories of high school Brian aren't the same as the ones I've kept from my many UF trips. Back then, he was just another Broward kid dreaming of escaping suburban life, annoying classmates with his eccentric shirts and spontaneous dances.

"I know I've never belonged to any sort of clique or group," he said. "I don't doubt they can find happiness that way, but it wouldn't be my happiness."

Because I'm familiar with the Brian who never belonged, seeing him catapulted into a state of uber-popularity has become a bit unsettling for me. We can't walk a block without someone stopping him for a chat or asking for a music recommendation. His feats have become part of Gainesville legend and even friends who don't personally know him talk about his adventures like the day he jokingly wrote an unpleasant letter to UF's paper, *The Alligator*, after a reporter called his hamster "mousy" in a story about a hamster race.

To me, Brian is still that guy who locked

ROCK, page 9



COST OF OTHER PLASTIC SURGERIES

- Breast implants /\$3,373
- Upper arm lift /\$3,106
- Buttock lift /\$3,630
- Cellulite treatment /\$127
- Thigh lift /\$3,857
- Facelift /\$4,822
- Tummy tuck /\$4,505
- Lower body lift /\$6,425
- Liposuction /\$2,223
- Laser hair removal /\$428

**National Averages provided by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons

REVIEWS (YOU CAN USE)

MOVIE *The Namesake*

GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Asst. Life! Editor

In *The Namesake*, the difficulties and extremes of adapting to a new culture are brought to the forefront as members of the Ganguli family face homesickness, loss and racism after moving from India to New York. Directed by Mira Nair (*Monsoon Wedding*, *Vanity Fair*), the film is a poignant adaptation of Pulitzer-Prize winning Jhumpa Lahiri's novel of the same title and bolsters a cast of Bollywood stars and White Castle enthusiasts that carry the movie until its fitting end.

The story revolves around the life of the Ganguli family. Following an arranged marriage in Calcutta, Ashoke (Irrfan Khan) and Ashima Ganguli (Tabu) move to New York, leaving behind one culture for another. As the Gangulis attempt to steady themselves in a new country, Ashima eventually gives birth to two children, Gogol (Kal Penn) and Sonia



(Sahira Nair).

The family's struggles with a new culture are blatantly apparent, foregoing any subtlety. In one scene following their son's birth, Ashima and Ashoke are informed that the baby cannot leave the hospital without

being named. Unlike their past culture where a baby can be named years after its birth, Ashima and Ashoke encounter an immediate and unexpected decision. They choose both a pet name and a "good name": Gogol and Nikhil, respectively; the names are based on Ashoke's favorite author, Nikolai Gogol.

As Ashima Ganguli, Tabu delivers the film's strongest and heart-wrenching performance. Her portrayal of a mother trying to find stability in a foreign country while attempting to keep touch with her children is honest and believable. Similarly, Irrfan Khan does a convincing job supporting and understanding Tabu's character.

Despite what the film's marketing may have you think, Kal Penn's Gogol is not the main character of the movie – he doesn't even appear until the film's second half. Still, Penn (*Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, *Van Wilder*) delivers in one of his first dramatic roles. While retaining some of his trademark wit, Penn shows his sensitive (and insensi-

tive) side as his character tries to break away from his family's Indian culture, showcasing Penn's versatility.

Although the film has a strong cast and captivating sets (*The Namesake* was partially shot in Calcutta), the movie has one noticeable fault: it's rushed. While this may be attributed to trying to capture all of the detail in the source material, it can be somewhat confusing for the viewer. Kal Penn's love interests Maxine (Jacinda Barrett) and Moushumi (Zuleikha Robinson) leave abruptly and are never heard of again. With each member of the Ganguli family having his or her own little story, the hurried pace can make it hard for some to keep track of everything.

Nevertheless, the film is enjoyable and, with such great acting performances, it's hard not to feel for the family – you'll laugh, cry and smile as the Ganguli family experiences life's turns. *The Namesake*, at its core, shows us that family is paramount in a world where everything else is uncertain.

Comedic actor discusses serious role in upcoming film

GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Asst. Life! Editor

Actor Kal Penn of *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* fame sat down for a roundtable interview with college reporters at the Intercontinental Hotel in Los Angeles to talk about his latest film, *The Namesake*, where he plays Gogol Ganguli. The film, which will see limited release in theaters on March 9, details the experience of the Ganguli family adapting to a foreign culture after moving from Calcutta, India, to New York.

Q: What was it like for you growing up Indian-American in New Jersey? Did you face any stereotypes?

Yeah, thanks to the genius of "The Simpsons" and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, it took a little bit of work to explain to people that I am neither a cartoon character nor a monkey brain eater.

Q: How did the Ganguli family in the film compare to your own family?

They're similar and different. I'm a first-generation, similar to Gogol – my parents moved here in

the late '60s.

I guess the differences are probably that Ashoke is a professor and Ashima is a housewife; my dad's an engineer and my mom got her degree in chemistry so they both work – that's a little bit different.

In the book, they grow up outside of Boston and I grew up outside of New York, and that's another similarity to the movie.

Q: A lot of the stuff that happens in the final product of the movie doesn't involve you at all. There's a good chunk of the movie that involves the parents. How did you fit your character into the larger scheme of things?

I think if you just do your job as your character, it automatically fits in. If you're in a scene where you don't say anything, don't focus on what other people are saying, you focus on exactly why you're in that scene to begin with, sort of like in real life. Anything from taking a drink of water to scratching your head to walking down the street, there's a reason why you're doing all of that – it's the same when you're acting. Every action has a justification.

Q: What was it like filming

in India? Have you been there before?

I had been there when I was five, but I don't remember any of it. It was intense. [The Taj Mahal] is a beautiful, beautiful building. I really enjoyed Calcutta. Contrary to the bulls--t in movies like *City of Joy*, it's a very clean city. They have a communist government, so their literacy rate is astronomical – it's almost at 100%. The treatment of men and women is a lot less disparate than other places. Because their literacy rate is so high, they post – granted, it's a government newspaper – the newspaper on the street corners so that everyone has access to the news. It's a very artistic, very literate, very cultural and clean city.

Q: Did you think that the adaptation from the novel to the script is accurate? Was there anything changed in the movie form?

I think so because the themes of the novel are the same as the themes of the film. It ends with the feeling of family and the feeling of hope. Regionally, it takes place in Cambridge – outside of Boston – versus the film adaptation, which is New York – that's number one. There are also chunks of it missing like when

he goes to Yale and grad school.

Q: The film is about the spiritual journey of this character. Did you take anything away from your character such as connecting or finding yourself? Did the character inspire you to look into that at all?

Not really, but it depends on what you mean. On one hand, not really. On the other hand, it's my favorite film I've worked on so far. We'd work 18-hour days and I would be exhausted and go home, and I couldn't wait to get up in the morning to do it all over again. In that sense, I was like, 'Okay, so it doesn't all have to be like *Van Wilder* was.' I can actually look forward to going to work in the morning and feel really passionate about what I was doing.

You can't compare them as immediately because it's a supporting character versus a fully fleshed-out character. If I had not done *Van Wilder*, I would have never done *The Namesake*. *Van Wilder* was one of the reasons I got *Harold and Kumar* because the studios want an actor who has done something in the past so they know their investment will be recouped eventually and that an

actor is not going to screw it up.

Q: How does it feel to kind of pave the way for Indian-Americans in the entertainment industry?

It would be great if the way was already paved. I hope more people enter the field. It's weird to think about that. I think Mira paved the way for that – I don't credit myself at all. There are a whole number of South Asian actors and actresses who are trained and studied in it and went to theatre school and are living in New York and L.A. and Chicago doing things. I don't think commercial success should be used to measure whether people are entering the industry.

Q: Anybody you'd like to work with?

I'd like to work with Natalie Portman. I don't know – you know how you think about this stuff all the time and then somebody asks you about it – MySpace me and I'll get back to you.

** For the full interview and more Life! articles, check out The Beacon website at www.beaconnewspaper.com



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Similar friends share different visions of rock'n'roll life

ROCK, page 7

me out of the car on a rainy day after I'd told him how I hate getting wet. While people admire his unique style and confidence, I think of the guy who keeps an emotional distance from his family and friends, complaining only when the girl he's willing to break his heart for won't break hers.

Behind the wicked smile and radiantly-dyed hair, I can see the convinced atheist struggling with what he calls his "Jewishness," only recently trying to understand the religion and culture he has denied

for most of his life.

So how did my insecure high school pal become this boisterous stranger with a rock'n'roll gait, and why is it that his transformation unsettles me?

Despite our similar interests and goals, our biggest difference is that we've come to accept opposite visions of life and our role in it.

While living in Broward, Brian always seemed like a stunned dynamo, biding his time by singing along to David Bowie and Chuck Berry while waiting for his energy to be released. Once he was settled and independent, he let loose and

wasted no time in living the kind of life his rock'n'roll heroes had sung about. He never waited for the adventure to happen because he was the adventure; he was the one in control.

Although I can agree that life is full of wonderful perils and adventure, I haven't been as keen as Brian to take hold of them.

Where he throws himself into life like a drunken star falling beautifully into a clear pool, I just stand and let it wash over me like an uncomfortable shower. I don't search for life - life comes after me and does whatever it wants.

Right now, Brian is deeply involved with his girlfriend, is getting ready to graduate and will soon be joining the Peace Corps. He is also rarely haunted by the thoughts of death and anxiety that often plague adolescents, two things he is grateful to live without.

Brian believes in the individual and is fascinated by the thought that men and women can rise out of the mass and wield enough influence to change those masses. He may even hope that one day he'll be one of those individuals.

"You have to find whatever it is that you can find the most fulfilling

and do it, and if for some reason that changes, you do something else, and you do that 'til you die," Brian said.

I'm glad he's been able to find a vision of life where happiness is all that matters. That may not be my vision, but that's why I keep searching through this column.

I only slightly regret that, while Brian rose to the stage and became a rock star, I've been left in the stands.

Join The Beacon as it searches for the answers to "The Meaning of Life" every other Monday.

Various products alternatives to plastic surgery

SURGERIES, page 7

think they are conscious about their health but also about looking good and feeling good."

With visibly smooth skin, Parekh admitted to using the products offered in his office.

But with all the alternatives available, some would still consider being cut up.

"I don't have the time or the will to exercise," Castillo said. "Dieting won't

let me enjoy the tastes of foods. With surgery, I'll just get cut and that's it."

Stephens advises that clarification on surgical procedures and its consequences are important for those seeking this measure.

"The key is to consider why we are doing something," Stephens said. "With any kind of medical procedure, a person needs to be clear on all the positive and negative things that could happen."

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Women's softball fails to record first win of season

SOFTBALL, page 12

bit frustrated," Eastman said. "Things finally starting to fall into place for us. Things are starting to click for us."

STANFORD 1, FIU 0

Following the lopsided loss to Texas Tech, the Golden Panthers had the misfortune of going against Stanford sophomore pitcher Missy Penna, who has recorded 10 or more strikeouts in four games this season.

The Miami native added one more to her list - striking out 14 Golden Panthers in a pitchers duel against FIU's Kerri Houck.

"I just tried to focus tonight," Penna said. "I was just trying to mix it up with the drop, the rise and the curve."

Her counterpart, Houck, gave up one earned run and seven hits in the loss.

Though the Cardinals' only run would come in the first inning off of a wild pitch, it would be the deciding factor in the game.

Penna had a perfect game until the bottom of the fifth inning when FIU right fielder Kim Rodriguez reached first base on a pop-up that just missed the glove of Cardinals third baseman Lindsay Key.

The Golden Panthers couldn't capitalize on their first hit as Penna struck out the next batter

she faced and then forced Lauren Spiers into a groundout.

Things began to unravel for the Golden Panthers in the seventh inning as Monique White fumbled a line drive.

With runners on first and second, Cardinals' freshman Alissa Haber singled to center field prompting FIU centerfielder Deomni Murray to make a hard throw to home plate, to keep another run from scoring.

"That's not that surprising. I know it kind of sounds mean, but we expect her to do that," coach Kim Grydir said. "She's that good. We get used to seeing that from her."

Beyond Murray's defense,

the rest of the Golden Panther defense was stout as it forced the Cardinals to leave seven base runners stranded.

In the bottom of the seventh inning, senior catcher Tabitha Embry hit a double to right field, but the Golden Panthers couldn't score the tying run as Penna struck out Rodriguez for the last out of the game.

"It's not disheartening, considering the way our season has been going so far," Houck said. "A [1-0] loss is actually a major step up, especially against a good team like Stanford."

STANFORD 1, FIU 0

FIU	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	PO	A
Murray, Deomni	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	1
Fink, Desiree	3	0	0	0	0	2	3	4
White, Monique	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	6
Embry, Tabitha	3	0	1	0	0	2	3	1
Rodriguez, Kim	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Cox, Amanda	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Spiers, Lauren	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Falk, Ashley	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Bell, Katie	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houck, Kerri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	23	0	2	0	0	14	21	14

Stanford	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	PO	A
Haber, Alissa	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	1
Rinehart, Jackie	3	0	0	0	0	2	3	4
Coon, Maddy	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	6
Smith, Michelle	3	0	1	0	0	2	3	1
Neill, Rosey	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Schroeder, Michelle	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Aggabao, Tricia	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Howe, Erin	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Key, Lindsay	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beardman, Anna	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Penna, Missy	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Totals	24	1	6	0	0	4	2	5

TEXAS TECH, FIU 8

FIU	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	PO	A
Murray, Deomni	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	0
Fink, Desiree	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	4
Spiers, Lauren	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	6
White, Monique	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Embry, Tabitha	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
Rodriguez, Kim	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Cox, Amanda	2	0	1	0	1	0	7	0
Elliquest, Suzy	1	0	0	0	0	1	5	0
Falk, Ashley	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Bell, Katie	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Eastman, Penny	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	23	1	3	1	3	6	21	7

Texas Tech	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	PO	A
Parker, Ashley	4	3	3	2	0	0	0	0
Zaragoza, Devin	3	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Patin, Montana	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
Riley, Whitney	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Corkin, Jennifer	3	1	2	4	0	1	3	1
Shupp, Megan	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Wike, Robyn	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Bower, Jennifer	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
Matthews, Danielle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Neuman, Brooke	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Kula, Natalie	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Parker, Heather	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	3
Eimen, Liz	3	1	1	0	0	0	7	0
Legler, Leah	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Watkins, Alex	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Jacobs, Ashly	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Totals	29	8	8	6	2	4	21	11



JESSICA MARSHALL/BEACON FILE PHOTO

SAFE: Senior outfielder Deomni Murray steals second. Coach Grydir said Murray's spectacular defensive plays are a normal part of her game.

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Ferguson reflects on season's success

FERGUSON, page 12

As a person?

I think I am an all around player. I think I have a good knowledge of the game and I can flip-flop positions. As a person, I am really goofy. I think I am just a normal, happy person who likes to have fun.

Q: You have led FIU in scoring 10 times this season. How do you do it?

I work hard. I have been working through all summer and practicing on my jumper. I think it is all about confidence.

Q: You are 15th on FIU's all-time career 3-pointer list. Do you think about the record?

What? I did not know. I did not know about the record. Well, that is good, but you know, I am not interested in personal achievements. I work hard with my teammates

everyday, and my ultimate goal is to win the championship.

All those individual awards and recognitions, if they come, they are welcome, but I am not thinking about it.

Q: Who would you credit as your mentor?

First is my mom who taught me to stay humble and keep my head up. Then, there is my high school coach Richard Walker, who was a great influence.

Q: Do you have a favorite professional basketball player?

My favorite player is Dwayne Wade. What I like about him

is his determination and maturity. He definitely is an all-around player.

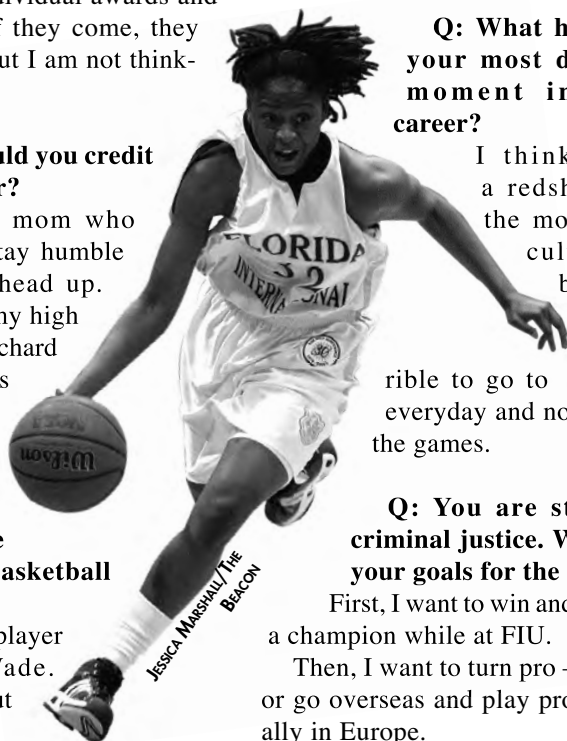
Q: What has been your most difficult moment in your career?

I think being a redshirt was the most difficult thing, because it was horrible to go to practice everyday and not play in the games.

Q: You are studying criminal justice. What are your goals for the future?

First, I want to win and become a champion while at FIU.

Then, I want to turn pro - WNBA or go overseas and play professionally in Europe.



BASKETBALL REPLAY

Men's basketball wins final home contest

FIU (MEN) 71, ULL 68

FIU 52

Despite losing, sophomore forward Alex Galindo with 5:42 left in the first half, the Golden Panthers (12-15, 7-10) managed to pull off a 71-68 victory against the Ragin' Cajuns (9-19, 7-10) at Pharmed Arena Feb. 22.

Guard Mike James led the Golden Panthers by scoring a career-high 16 points in the victory. The Golden Panthers will move on to the Sun Belt Conference championship for a first-round game next Wednesday, Feb. 28.

ULL (WOMEN) 75,

In its last home game of the season, the women's basketball team fell to the Ragin' Cajuns 75-52 Feb. 22 at Pharmed Arena.

Senior center Lasma Jekabsone led the Golden Panthers (15-12, 9-9) in the loss, scoring 11 points. The Golden Panthers weren't able to contain ULL's (22-7, 13-4) Yolanda Jones, who scored 27 points.

The women will play a first round Sun Belt tournament game Feb. 28; the opponent and site have yet to be determined.

-Compiled by Charlie Grau

Golden Panther hockey club heading to playoffs

HOCKEY, page 12

limited to just one game this season. Despite his injury, he is part of the club and has bonded with his teammates.

"We spend so much time together that we become interested in each other's lives," Hernandez said.

Hernandez supports his companions and watches his goalie counterparts - senior Carlos Novoa and freshman Juan Vinueza - perform on the ice.

The duo has combined for 442 saves out of 524 opportunities in 20 games.

"We can either make or break the game," Novoa said. "The goalie can be the hero or get blamed [for the loss]."

Novoa and Vinueza alternate games to avoid fatigue and have aided the club to a 13-3-4 regular season record and a first place tie in the Southeast Regional division.

The regular season has reached its conclusion for the Golden Panthers and the playoffs begin March 3, which means the seniors are nearing the end of their careers.

"This is my last chance to win it all," Novoa said. "I'm going to miss traveling and just being with the team."

The season's end also concludes the playing career of senior assistant captain Carlos Toledo. However, he has been with the team before he wore the team's uniform.

The team's coach is Carlos's older brother. He traveled with the club when Frank was still a player.

He was in charge of providing players with beverages throughout the course of the games.

"I always remember the friendships for sure," Carlos said. "It's great to be friends during the season [and] out-

side of hockey as well."

According to Carlos, he has been around nearly every previous FIU hockey team, but this one excels in the talent department.

"This is by far the most skillful team I've seen," he said.

The Golden Panthers have never won a national title, but have finished as high as No. 7 in the country in 1997. Therefore, this team - currently ranked No. 6 - is one

of the most successful teams in the program's history.

Junior forward Nick Correa has contributed to the Golden Panthers' success. Correa transferred from Suffolk University in Boston, where he played collegiate hockey under the NCAA. In the regular season, he has recorded six game-winning goals and leads the nation in that statistical category.

"I never feel we lose until time is up," Correa said. "I

always want the last shot."

In joining FIU, Correa has also transitioned from playing under scholarship to being charged to play.

The Hockey club is not affiliated with NCAA. Therefore, they club is not considered an official FIU team. External sponsorship does not exist for the hockey club. Every player pays for their own equipment and travel expenses.

"We have fundraisers,

but the rest is paid by us," Hernandez said.

The experience has been well worth the expenses for Hernandez, who recalled his early FIU career.

"I came in as a freshman [and] I didn't know anybody," he said. "I joined the club and I couldn't be happier."

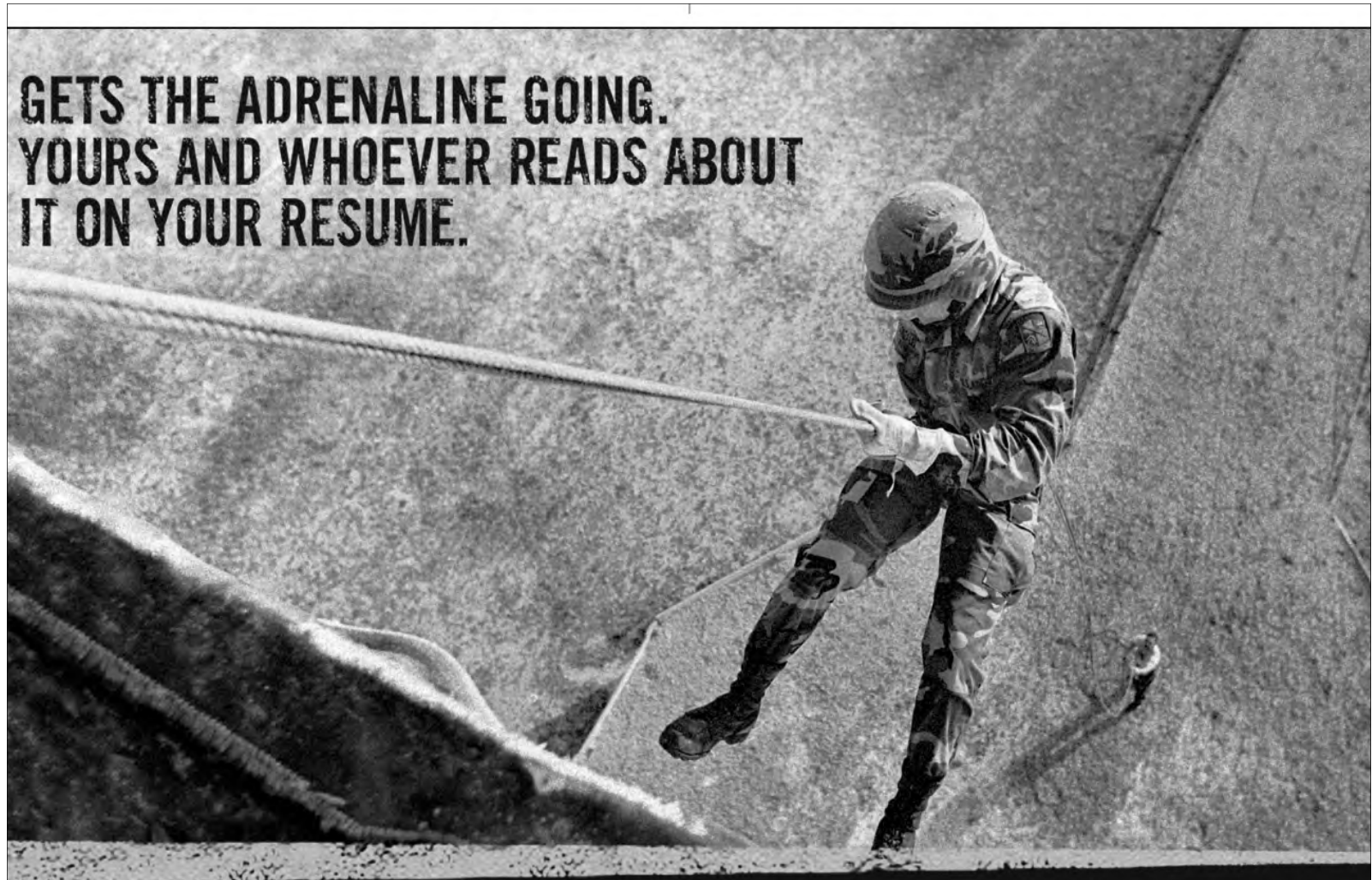
Last season was one plagued by injury for the Golden Panthers. This year, the team is healthier and more in sync.

"They've played together longer now," coach Frank Toledo said. "There's more chemistry in the team."

Despite finishing last in the Southeast Regional division with a 4-16 record last year, the coach is confident his players can go from worst in their division to best in the country in one year.

"I've never been so excited about a team before," he said. "I think we're going to win it all."

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MYSTERY MEN



FIU hockey club ranked sixth in nation

SERGIO BONILLA
Asst. Sports Editor

The Golden Panthers' roller hockey program is ranked No. 6 in the nation out of 174 programs.

However, the program is not considered an official FIU team - only a club.

The hockey club began in 1996 and is now led by one of the club's founding fathers, coach Frank

Tuledo.

"I was a player here when the team first started," Tuledo said. "The team was a big part of my FIU experience."

Tuledo graduated in 2000 and returned to coach the club in 2006.

The University does not recognize the club as part of the athletics department, but team members practice together, play together and travel together, just like any other team.



PHOTOS COURTESY GOLDEN PANTHERS HOCKEY CLUB

ROLLING: The Golden Panthers Hockey Club (13-3-4) is ranked sixth in the nation, entering the Southeast regional championship.

None of the games are held in Miami. Games have been held in cities such as Tallahassee and Savannah.

"When we travel, we bond, spend time with each other and explore the downtown nightlife together,"

sophomore goalie Christopher Hernandez said.

Hernandez suffered a season-ending knee injury during his freshman year. His playing time has been

HOCKEY, page 11

Witty athlete examines life beyond the court

CHRISTIAN J. GUILLÉN
Contributing Writer

The women's basketball team is on fire after winning four-straight games. As of Feb. 6, the Golden Panthers are third in the Sun Belt Conference East Division, thanks in part to junior shooting guard LaQuetta Ferguson.

Ferguson is averaging 16.7 points-per-game and 4.9 rebounds-per-game this season and has led the team 10 times in scoring.

Q: Your nickname is "Quick Wit It." Where did you get it?

Oh. [Laughs] "Quick Wit It." I gave it to myself. It all started just goofing around. I have a quick first step when going towards the basket, so there is the name.

Q: Is it hard to be a student athlete?

Yes. When I first got here, I thought that it was going to be easy and that I could do all the things I did back at high school, but it is different. I learned about my personal responsibilities and about time management. Also, the program is not only focused on the athletic part, but also on the academic part and they want everything to work fine for you.

Q: Do you have a good communication with coach Cindy Russo and

your teammates?

Yes. I have a good communication with the coach and all my teammates. It's like coach Russo trusts in me, and I have to trust in my teammates, so it is a give and give interaction.

Q: You started as a freshman averaging 9.5 points per game and 1.1 assists. Now, you average 16.7 ppg and 4.9 apg. To who do you attribute this improvement?

To myself [mainly]. I work hard everyday in practice. Also, to my mom, who is always supporting me, and to my coaching staff.

Q: FIU is now 13-8 with a four-game winning streak. What do you think is still needed to improve?

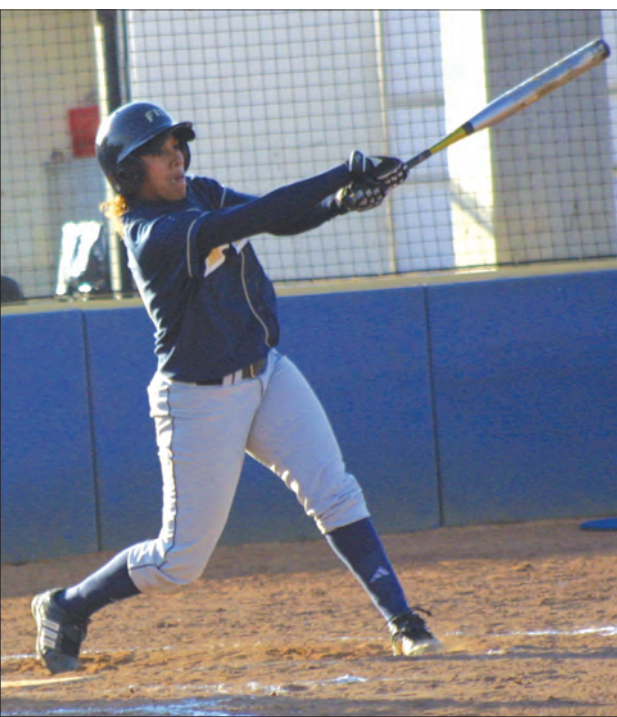
I think a consistent defense is key for FIU's success in the long run. Because we are a running team, I think we need to stay on [the] boards and work on our defense.

Q: Do you have a pre-game ritual or routine?

Yes. I sleep before the game [laughs]. I also leave all my clothes organized and clean, so that before the game I have everything set up.

Q: How do you describe yourself as a player and

FERGUSON, page 10



FERNANDO GARCIA/THE BEACON

MISS: The Golden Panthers softball team struggled offensively, scoring one run in the two games combined.

Misfortunes continue for women's softball

CHARLIE GRAU
Sports Editor

Following their early exit from the Louisville Desert Classic in Las Vegas the Golden Panthers (0-12) looked to better their fortunes in the Adidas Golden Panther Invitational held Feb. 22-25 at the University Park Softball Complex.

Their fortune on day one of tournament play was similar to past results as they lost to Texas Tech (7-4) and Stanford (10-2) in a doubleheader.

TEXAS TECH 8, FIU 1

The Red Raiders got off to a fast start, scoring a run in the first and second innings to put them ahead 2-0.

Sophomore pitcher Penny Eastman ran into trouble in the first inning

after giving up the game's first hit to Red Raiders senior outfielder Ashley Parker.

After stealing second, a single to left field by Jennifer Corkin drove in the game's first run.

"It's a combination of a lot of things. It's just a bunch of little things that aren't going our way," Eastman said. "They have balls that are falling and ours aren't falling. It's nothing that can't be fixed."

Parker would again hurt the Golden Panthers after singling to left field, driving in another run for the Red Raiders.

"This has been a very difficult start," coach Kim Gwydir said. "This has been the most difficult schedule we've started with ever."

Through two weeks of play, the Golden Panthers have already played

against four teams in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll: No. 1 Tennessee, No. 5 Stanford, No. 6 California and No. 21 Louisville.

"We want to play the best of the best. We pride ourselves on not only playing a great schedule - teams want to come because of the good competition," Gwydir said. "I knew these first twelve games were going to be a test and we're either going to pull together as a team or fall apart."

So far, the team has remained together and players believe their level of play is picking up and will be where it needs to be before their first conference game March 10 against Western Kentucky.

"We've never been down or anything, we've only been a little

SOFTBALL, page 10