

FIU submits budget, expects big bucks

C. JOEL MARINO
Editor in Chief

University officials will be busy traveling to Tallahassee for the next few months to ask state legislators for at least \$98 million to fund various school projects, but how much we'll actually get is anybody's guess.

"You always put more than you expect to get back, then you adjust along the way," said Steve Sauls, vice president of governmental relations.

A list of budget priorities given to *The Beacon* include funding for new University buildings, money for the College of Medicine and aid with enroll-

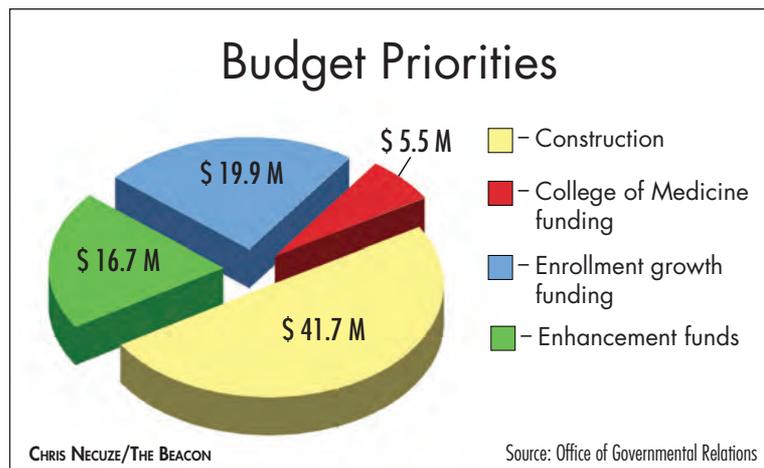
ment growth.

- The Board of Governors – the entity in charge of overseeing the state's public university system – requested \$470.3 million from the Public Education Capital Outlay Trust Fund for university projects. This special reserve fund (also known as PECO) is used specifically to finance construction and building renovations. Out of this proposed amount, FIU would receive \$41.7 million that would be allocated to projects such as a graduate classroom building (\$4.68 million) and a science classroom complex (\$29 million).

- The College of Medicine,

which was approved by the BOG and State Legislature last year, is expected to receive around \$5.5 million. This is seen as just a portion of a seven-year incremental request that would eventually add up to \$22 million. Funds received this year would be used for faculty salary, administrative and support personnel expenses, and equipment, library and technology resources, among other things.

However, a long-term estimate shows that the college would require \$64 million in facilities construction. The two main buildings in the works are a molecular science building (\$24 million) funded solely through



federal grants and PECO money and the main medical center (\$40 million), which would be funded through donations and matching grants. There have been no

updates given on the search for a private donor.

- Based on the given docu-

BUDGET, page 4

Chat answers students' concerns

KELLY POVEROMO
Contributing Writer

Students can now kiss the hassle of enrollment goodbye. Since November of 2006, the Enrollment Services at FIU has been hosting an online chat service called Panther Chat for those in need of on-spot financial, admissions or registration aid.

"Holding on the telephone and making inconvenient, long lines are a thing of the past," said Marco Gomez, business analyst for Enrollment Services, in the Panther Chat press release.

Now help is only a click away with the new Panther Chat, an online customer service for students. By visiting the MyFIU portal online, students have access to live chats with enrollment service staff members in regards to financial aid, admissions and registration.

"It was going to happen eventually. Almost everything is online now and I am glad FIU has joined in on that trend. It makes things a lot easier," said Megan Rojas, a freshman and Panther Chat user.

The hours of Panther Chat vary depending on department. The financial aid and registration chat is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and admissions between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. After hours, students will be able to leave a cyber message for representatives who will respond to their question within 24 hours. Students may also receive a transcript of their chat with the Enrollment Services staff member for future reference.

The idea of Panther Chat was first conceived in July of 2006. Enrollment Services used focus groups, a collection of students who expressed their opinions on specific academic ideas, to form this new service.

CHAT, page 2

VENDING VENTURE



CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

GIFTS ON WHEELS: Roberto Rabionet (left) has owned his perfume vending cart in the Graham Center for more than 13 years. Four other consistent vendors sell their wares near the GC food court, including Mary Arroya (right) who sells jewelry.

Vendors become part of GC tradition

CHARLIE GRAU
Sports Editor

For the past 13 years, Robert Rabionet has stood by his vending cart near the Graham Center food court selling a variety of perfumes and colognes to students.

"I think this is the best place to work," Rabionet said. "For me, FIU is like a big family. After so many years, everyone's been very nice to us."

The five consistent vendors who are often seen by students and faculty while walking through the GC halls have become part of the building's growing tradition over time.

Prior to selling his fragrances inside GC, Rabionet used to sell his products by the University Park water fountain. Although it was much hotter outside, he didn't mind the heat because it was better than his previous job working in the home department for Burdines.

"It was such a pain. It was good when commission was very high, but after that I left," Rabionet said. "[At Burdines] you have to work really hard. Here it's a little more relaxed. I live close by so it's very convenient." Not all the vendors switched careers like Rabionet.

Ingrid Carbajal has been selling Peruvian jewelry since she can remember.

Like Rabionet, she heard about people selling goods at FIU from another vendor.

After traveling from craft show to craft show, Carbajal decided to try her luck with students.

"I love working with young people," Carbajal said. "Whenever they see me outside of school, they'll say hi."

Over the years, the GC vendors have created strong friendships and even developed their own security system.

"We are all good friends and protect each other. When Ingrid goes to lunch, I'll watch her cart and vice versa,"

VENDORS, page 4

THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

MONDAY • MARCH 5

SPC American Heritage Opening Ceremonies “A Trip back to the 50’s”: 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

SPC “Rock Around the Clock” Karaoke Night: 7 p.m., Porter Davis Game Room (UP)

Panther Rage Meeting: 4 p.m., GC 140 (UP)
“Culture of the Middle East” Lecture: 6:30 p.m., GC 243 (UP)

SPC Women’s Health Fair: 11 a.m., WUC Panther Square (BBC)

TUESDAY • MARCH 6

SPC Coffee House (with performances by Giel & Carlos Beronatti): 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

American Identity Head to Head Challenge: 6 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

SPC General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

SOC General Meeting: 5 p.m., GC 150 (UP)

“Baraka” Lecture: 7 p.m., GC Panther Suite (UP)

WEDNESDAY • MARCH 7

SPC American Heritage presents Family Feud: 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

SGA General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 150 (UP)

SPC Women’s Celebration – Safe Sex Talk with FIU: 6 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

THURSDAY • MARCH 8

SPC presents Line Dancing (with Boogie Man George): 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

Greek Awards: 7 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

Big Gurl Fashion Show: 8 p.m., WUC Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre (BBC)

International Students Club presents Game Day: 1 p.m., WUC Panther Square (BBC)

FRIDAY • MARCH 9

SPC Films presents “Happy Feet”: 7 p.m. & 10 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

FIU Lecture Series – Acoustical Astronomy: 8 p.m., CP 145 (UP)

LOL Comedy Series “All Women Edition”: 8 p.m., WUC Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre (BBC)

-Compiled by Reuben Pereira

ZUMBA!



CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

HIPS DON'T LIE: Students dance and exercise to zumba March 1 in the Graham Center Pit. Zumba is a new weight loss class offered at FIU that combines dances such as salsa and belly dancing with aerobics.

Panther chat solves concerns

CHAT, page 1

“Our main focus was on the students. Obviously we do not wish to force feed something they do not want or need, so prior to executing anything, we asked students for their opinions,” Gomez said.

From this study, they realized this would be an ideal service since most students are often already on their computers.

“We are noticing a positive [outcome],” said Gomez, “It is not just a hunch.”

After the using the chat, students are prompted to answer a survey on their opinion of the service. Accord-

ing to survey results, Panther Chat has a current success rate of 93% implying users would recommend the service to a friend.

As far as future services, Gomez claims to be working on a frequently asked questions page.

“[Panther Chat] is all about making it more convenient and faster for the student,” said Gomez.

While visiting the Enrollment Services office is still an option, students may find it more convenient to visit Panther Chat from the comfort of their residence hall, home or a computer lab.

As mentioned in the press release, “students can access Panther Chat

while navigating through any of the Enrollment Services websites by clicking on the Panther Chat buttons, which are readily available on practically every page.”

“Panther Chat was helpful,” Rojas said. “I found [the chat] while I was surfing the financial aid website and was able to solve my problems right away.”

There’s a possibility that other departments may join Panther Chat, but nothing has been confirmed.

“Our main goal is satisfying the student,” Gomez said. “We want them to get information in a more efficient way and if this raises satisfaction rates, then why not?”

SGC-UP Notes

Feb. 28 Call to order: 3:43 p.m., Adjournment: 5:23 p.m.

President’s Report (Alfonso “Alfie” Leon):

- Special presentation by Governmental Relations office to prepare students for FIU Day.
- Florida Crystals recently gave \$1 million grant to applied research for alternative fuels.

Comptroller’s Report (Nancy Cadavid):

- Budget deliberation date was supposed to be March 2. New tentative date will be March 10.

Chief of Cabinet’s Report (Larissa Lockett):

- White House officials March 13 and 14 in GC Ballrooms.

Speaker of the House’s Report (Rocio Perez):

- No council meeting next week. House meeting March 5 to discuss legislation changes.

Student Services (Gretel Hebbert):

- Meeting with Felecia Townsend regarding beverage bids. They are currently in Phase 1. Request for vendors document came back from legal. Not submitted to the general public yet.
- Meeting with Victor Citerella from facilities management for outdoor outlets on March 2.

Student Union (Michael Jadoo):

- Received draft from FIU College of Architecture. Requesting \$10,000 from SGA for the student remodeling project. Architecture students are going to redesign GC 140 and 150.
- Coke has contacted Townsend. They are asking for a forum March 28 in the Graham Center.

Student Health Advisory (Rebecca Louisdor):

- The Health forum was Feb. 27. It was more of a discussion. The clinic hours were reduced by two hours because they did not receive as much money as they thought they were going to get from the fee increase. They have established a partnership with Baptist satellite hospitals with some sort of discount.

Elections Board (Judene Tulloch):

- Applications are due March 9 at 5 p.m.
- Charlie Andrews: BBC has decided to extend their deadline for a week. Their applications are due March 15.

New Business (aye-nay-abstain):

- Appropriation A07-04 for \$800 for invitations and refreshments for the School of Architecture’s two Gallery Nights (8-0-3)
 - A.J. Meyer (At-large): I just want to ask again that we get these appropriations before the meeting if possible.
- Appropriation A07-05 for \$2,000 for food, speakers and rainbow tassels for Stonewall Pride Alliance Spring LGBT Awareness Program Day (6-0-5)
- Approval of the the revised elections code passes.

Absences:

- Jennifer Ruiz (At-large), Mikana Maeda (Architecture), Brian Andino (CHUA)

Announcements:

- 10 people attended Feb. 28 safety forum. Chief Bill King gave a great discussion.

-Compiled by Angelina Troff

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ECE

New Information Technology chief hired to boost campus wireless service

YOLANNE ALMANZAR
Contributing Writer

Min Yao never planned to be known as the “IT guy,” but now, as the new vice president and chief information officer for the division of information technology, one of his goals is to make FIU a wireless campus.

“I want to be known as the IT guy who works for students’ needs,” Yao said.

In recent years, University officials have found that wireless connection on campus

is among the top students’ needs and Yao – who’s been here a little over six weeks – believes that students should be the priority.

Yao’s position makes him responsible for all of the University’s technology services, including PantherSoft, the IT security office and media services in the classroom. He is currently working with the University to install an additional 200 wireless access points, focused on the largest classrooms on campus by December 2007. There are also plans to install wireless connections in certain areas of campus housing before Fall 2007.

James Bond, the University controller and chair of the search and screen committee responsible for

hiring Yao, said Yao stood out from the other candidates because of his ability to work with others.

“We got the sense that he was going to partner with everybody, especially students and faculty, when finding the solution to a problem,” Bond said.

Three years ago, Yao worked with students to set up a campus-wide wireless network at California

State University, Dominguez Hills, where he was the chief information technology officer and associate vice president of information technology. That particular project took Yao and the group eight months to complete.

Yao has been working in the field of information technology for more than 10 years but he was initially interested in studying bilingual memory storage. With a master’s degree in applied linguistics and a doctorate degree in educational administration, he began work as the Coordinator of Institutional Research at Vancouver Community College in British Columbia, August 1990.

But it wasn’t until frustration over the computers at an old office job that he realized his expertise lay

in computer technology. It was at this office – where employees still depended on printing from a main-frame located outside the office – that he decided to install a new computer system that linked personal computers together. The new set up allowed office employees to print from a local printer.

Yao smiles as he remembers the accidental discovery and says that he never feels tired when he’s working with computers. He likes to read journals on the latest technology after work and test

new software himself.

“I often wonder why people pay me to do what I love to do,” he said. Bond attributes Yao’s success to his ability to internalize data and make conclusions.

“He impressed us during his interview because he was a tremendous researcher. He just understood our University,” Bond said.

Yao says President Modest A. Madique’s clear vision to make FIU an academic institution is what attracted him most to the school. Yao is working on enhancing classroom technology, such as the installation of speakers, screens and connections to the Internet. The goal is to have all classrooms fully equipped in five to six years.

NEWSFLASH

Former FIU academics get maximum sentences

Convicted ex-FIU academics Carlos and Elsa Alvarez apologized Feb. 27 for the secret life they led as informants on Miami’s exile community for Cuba.

U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore slammed Carlos Alvarez with the maximum five-year prison sentence for conspiring to act as an unregistered Cuban agent and Elsa Alvarez with the maximum three years’ imprisonment for harboring her husband’s illicit intelligence work and failing to report it to authorities.

The sentences marked the closing chapter to the Alvarezes’ life as once-accomplished Cuban exiles.

FIU administrators, students head to Tallahassee

University President Modesto A. Madique, members of the FIU Board of Trustees and a delegation of more than 20 student representatives are heading to the sixth annual FIU Day in Tallahassee March 7-8.

One of the goals of the annual meeting is to discuss upcoming events and developments in the University. In addition, the FIU delegation will be lobbying state legislators for University funds.

For more information visit the FIU Governmental Relations web site.

- Compiled by C. Joel Marino and Yesenia Forte

“**James Bond**, Chair of the Search and Screen Committee

We got the sense that he was going to partner with everybody, especially students and faculty, when finding the solution to a problem.

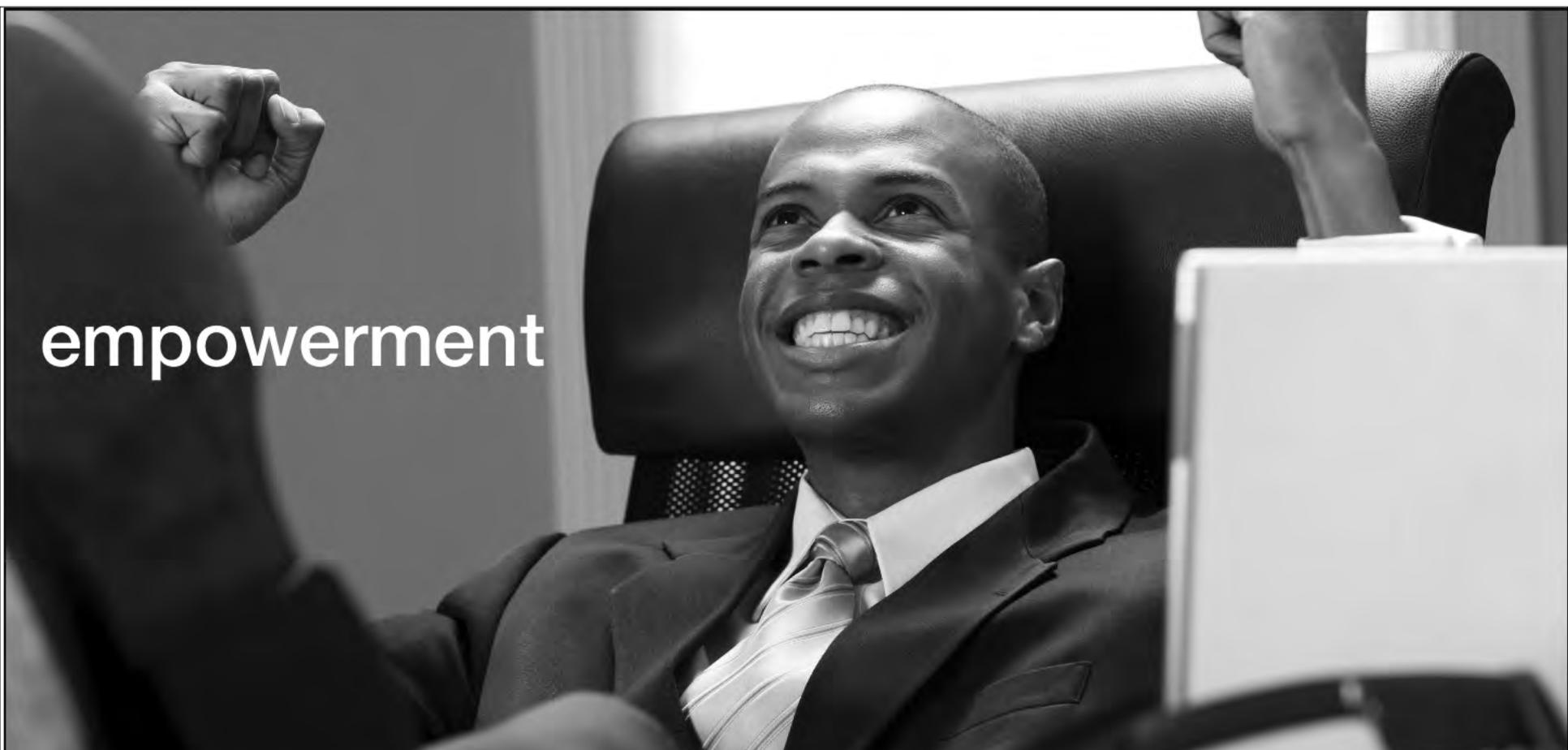
CORRECTIONS

In the March 1 issue, the article titled “Sharpton promises students he’ll visit shantytown” should have attributed the quote, “When there are fights like these, we would hope black leaders would help” to Chris Daley.

In the same issue, the article titled “Madique does the time warp” should have been credited to contributing writer Jose Martinez.

In the story titled “Patrons party at annual fest,” *The Beacon* could not provide evidence that there was a mostly drunken crowd as was reported.

The Beacon will gladly change any errors. Call our UP office at 305-348-2709 or BBC at 305-919-4722.



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Enrollment, building renovations top priorities

BUDGET, page 1

ments, it seems that the budget proposal's main priority is enrollment growth. The BOG approved \$148.3 million to bring in an additional 10,061 full time enrollment students state-wide. An FTE is a student taking 12 or more credits per semester. Out of this amount, FIU hopes to receive \$31.7 million to increase University FTE's by almost 2,000.

"We want the government to pay for enrollment growth so students don't have to suffer for it," Sauls said.

The board also recommended that \$16.7 million be used for FIU's enhancement funds. These are funds that may be used at the university's discretion. If this

exact amount is approved, research projects such as the hurricane initiative maybe be handsomely rewarded with almost \$3 million going to the Wall of Wind, a hurricane simulation project.

Around \$2 million would be set aside to improve student access to wireless networks, though this issue is tied to a \$10 technology fee for all public university students proposed by the BOG.

Legislative sessions will run until May 4.

Each institution's Board of Trustees must approve preliminary budgets. This version is then presented to the BOG for recommendations.

The governor also drafts his own

budget, listing what he feels each public university should receive.

The state legislature then takes both budgets into consideration and allocated funds based on this comparison.

"The legislature controls the purse strings, they control the money. That's why it's important to get our name out

there, so they know not just what we want, but what we represent," Sauls said.

Students, faculty and administrators will be traveling to Tallahassee March 7 and 8 to lobby legislators during "FIU Day," an annual trip that usually takes place at the start of the sessions.

UP vendors feel at home

VENDORS, page 1

Ribionet said.

Ruth Hamilton, executive director of GC, said that back in the early '80s, there were between 20 to 30 vendors in GC, who sold anything from shoes to dresses, jewelry to shirts, and other items.

"We were trying to see how we could trap students in the building. Students would come and go like a gas station. We wanted to bring items that students could buy," Hamilton

said.

Over time, though, Hamilton said that the University felt that there needed to be more space for students and other student organizations so the number of permanent vendors was reduced to only five.

According to Hamilton, vendors rent their carts on a week-to-week basis and additional vendors are only brought in six times a year, during vendor fairs that usually take place during the holidays.

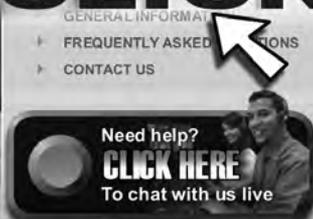
Hamilton also said that there is a long list of vendors waiting for an opportunity to sell their merchandise.

In order to become part of the GC team, vendors must have a peddler's license and the proper insurance to sell their goods.

"They are a welcomed amenity to the students. They add a little bit of life and spirit to the University," Hamilton said. "We want [GC] to be a one-stop place for students."

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WHAT'S THE DISH?



CRISTELA GUERRA/THE BEACON

MEAL DEALS: Students, faculty and members of the Aramark company got together twice last Thursday to discuss up and coming changes to the dining facilities at the Biscayne Bay Campus. Students gave their opinions as to the type of food they prefer. **READ OUR STORY MARCH 8 FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN DINING.**

SGC-BBC Notes

SGA General Meeting Feb. 28, 2007
Call to order: 3:38pm
Adjournment: 5:24pm

President's Report (Camilo Silva)

- Students running for SGA cabinet positions: the SGA president is the only one who can appoint the cabinet positions, but the executive board can advise the president on his appointments. New members include: Melanie Hodge, Elections Commissioner; Kinesha Reid, Clerk of Council; Vernan Green, Internal/External Affairs Director; Daniel Macadar, Community Relations And Environmental Affairs Director.

Vice President's Report (Brent Maximin)

- For the last two weeks, Maximin has met with several SGA members to get feedback on SGA and each member's position and duties. He wants to meet with a new batch of members.

Guest Speakers

- Noel Guerrero, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Internship opportunities available to all FIU students in Washington, D.C.

Old Business

- Vote to appoint Rene Portillo as SGA Graduate Student Representative. Aye-nay-abstain: 6-1-0

-Compiled by Jessica Solis

Traveling exhibit showcases African-American history

ALEXANDRA MCANARNEY
Staff Writer

The "SANKOFA: African-American Museum on Wheels" arrived on the heels of Black History Month at FIU last Monday with 35 display tables containing around \$1 million worth of artifacts dating back to around 1860.

This museum on wheels has existed for the past 15 years and is known globally, traveling across the United States, and even to Europe, the Caribbean and Africa. "Everywhere I go it's very well received," said Angela Jennings, museum curator. "It's very important for people to see what the African-American culture is about and for other ethnic students to take in the displays. Most people are not well versed with the inventions that were created within the black community and we want to educate them."

Sankofa is an African word that refers to the reclamation of one's past in order to move forward.

"It's been a challenge getting her here. We would like her to be at a fixed location for three days, but having her at the University is a privilege," said Robert Coatie, senior director for Multicultural Programs and Services, referring to the museum.

The items chronicled African-American history, beginning with slavery, through the cotton trade and going through World War II and the Civil Rights movement.

Included among the display pieces are two hand crafted quilts from South Carolina commissioned by Jennings.

The quilts are maps detailing the route used by escaped slaves to follow north into Canada or south into Florida to be helped by Native Americans.

"On the quilt, it tells you that

when you're thirsty to search the sky for flying geese because they'll lead you to water. A bear paw and a monkey wrench lead you in different directions, and North, South, East and West are stitched on to the quilt," Jennings said.

Akin Ogundiran, director of African New World Studies, said he believes this display de-emphasizes modern day materialism.

"Things were less materialistic. Common, hand made things were of great importance. These are small artifacts that carry with them historical significance with the meaning they held to the person that made them," he said.

Other artifacts include hand crafted materials that hold significant historical value, such as Civil War memorabilia and plaques commemorating the Tuskegee Airmen, the first all-black air squadron put together during WWII.

"[Jennings] made the wise

decision of coming in the winter months, because up north is all blizzards and her things would probably be damaged," Coatie said.

First edition copies on books on the subject of slavery were also found on tables within the display with titles such as *Holocaust for Beginners* by S.E. Anderson and the cover shot of a Ku Klux Klan dragon and his daughter in Klan attire.

"When there is a lecture, time must be given to it, but here students can just walk by and have



GAUDRY PUECHAVY/THE BEACON

SANKOFA: Pieces of history took over FIU last Monday and Tuesday during the SANKOFA museum exhibit.

some historical contact," Coatie said.

FIU student Angela Sotolongo agreed.

"People will have better knowledge and won't call things like that primitive. It's a way to try to understand a part of the community and try to break barriers."

Professor's methods influenced by philosophers, Star Trek

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Steven Mizrach
Sociology and Anthropology Dept.

LALINDA DE LA FUENTE
Staff Writer

Steven Mizrach's students call him a genius. Yet, for the adjunct professor in the department of sociology and anthropology, it's all about making a difference.

Mizrach earned his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Florida in 1999 and

specialized in anthropology and sociology of science and technology.

Mizrach, a self-proclaimed Star Trek geek, recalls a moment in the saga's

history when the dying Captain Kirk asks fellow Captain Picard why he became a starship captain.

Picard responded that it was because it was in that captain's chair he could make a difference.

Teaching subjects such as Hallucinogens and Culture (ANT 4461) and Science, Technology and Society (SYP 4421), Mizrach

shares his passion in much the same way.

"I don't want people thinking anthropology only studies 'primitive' people who live in huts and rainforests or that societies with space shuttles ... must be better ethnically, morally or otherwise," Mizrach said.

According to Mario Funk, one of Mizrach's students, the professor uses his passion as a means of getting through to his students.

"Sometimes he starts to get emotionally charged, usually concerning various social injustices that exist in this country or the world at large."

Mizrach cites John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator, as his biggest influence while teaching.

"Dewey argued that an education is a public

good not just because it fills you with useless facts or prepares you for a corporate cubicle, but because it gives you the tools to be an informed, empowered citizen of your republic," Mizrach said.

A Facebook group titled, "I want to have Mizrach's babies (even if I'm a man)" reflects student's wacky appreciation for Mizrach, but he stays grounded, somewhat modest, and even slightly perplexed through all his praise.

"I have not found a cure for any major world disease or solved any global world conflict," he said. "If people listen to some of my ideas and they take them further, exploring nooks and crannies I never thought to myself, mission accomplished."

OPINION

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

Shanty hut should inspire students to help poor

ROQUE CORONA
Staff Writer

Last week's exhibition of a mock shantytown hut behind the Graham Center at University Park was an excellent way of "bringing a glimpse of poverty," as Andrew Santa Lucia put it in a *Beacon* article published Feb. 22, to the student population. The youth of America needs to look beneath the surface of their prosperous country and see those who are in desperate need, because this generation will have the power to assist the less fortunate in the future.

Mohammed Malik, president of Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, commented on the shantytown display.

"By seeing this demonstration, people are becoming aware of the issue. That's why we're here," Malik said.

And people do need to become aware of the homelessness issue. The Office on Homelessness and the Florida Coalition for the Homeless estimated that on any given day in 2005, there were 83,391 homeless persons. That accounts for 5 percent of Florida's population.

Moreover, based on a survey sample, it is estimated that families and households with minor children make up over 38 percent of the total homeless population,

and children under the age of 18 represent 25 percent.

But these figures mean nothing to the youth of Florida. As far as they're concerned, they're just numbers – nothing more.

That's why the work of the members of the FIU group A.N.S.W.E.R., and of the Critical Awareness for Social Inequality in Society is so important. They are working to display the problem of homelessness in a more tangible and personal fashion. Their efforts aim to influence the student population's view of the homeless, which is almost certainly the best way to make a significant impact.

Government grants and care plans, such as the \$1.4 billion in funding approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development earlier this month, are a great way to help the homeless; however, such methods of assistance almost never reach the entire homeless population.

The Office of Homelessness reported that in 2005, only 16,332 homeless persons – less than 20 percent of the homeless – were served under grant-funded programs.

Although Miami-Dade County homeless numbers have dropped in recent months, advocates say that the overall demand for resources for the homeless

and near-homeless in Miami-Dade is actually on the rise.

What is even more alarming is that, according to The National Coalition for the Homeless, Florida has the highest rate of violence against the homeless. In Fort Lauderdale alone, seven acts of violence against the homeless were reported last year.

While assistance for the homeless is obviously a very important present-day issue, more work must be done to assure the aid and support of the homeless in the future. No doubt, the work of A.N.S.W.E.R. and Critical Awareness for Social Inequality in Society is a great start, but more people must get involved in order to overcome this great challenge.

These demonstrations of shantytowns make a lasting impression in the minds of the youth and give them a personal view of how these unfortunate people live.

Many people may not want to live on the streets scrounging for food and sleeping night after night on pavement, but nobody really knows what that's like until they live it themselves. These displays are the closest way to show the students the reality of the homeless problem that our nation is facing.

Hopefully, one of those students who witnessed the display last week will one day be in a



CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

SHANTYTOWN, USA: FIU students recently built a mock shanty hut to call attention to the problem of poverty and homelessness in South Florida.

position to make a difference in the community, and by remembering that display they will be moved to take action and lend a helping hand.

The homeless problem will

not be solved any time soon, but with our effort, and with the aid of those with compassion for the homeless, we can raise awareness and in turn get the message to the world.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bathroom bigots at BBC run amok

I can feel the blood rush to my face every time I think about the evil that assaulted me in the bathroom that day at the Biscayne Bay Campus. Even as I write, I refrain from allowing my hands to make fists of rage, so I continue typing. Anger can often cloud the mind like a heavy fog, and such a handicap is not one I desire to burden myself with. However, a few days ago I was in a bathroom stall in Academic I, doing, well, what people usually do in bathroom stalls (other than graffiti). Operations went well, I'm glad to report, until I flushed and turned to walk away. It was then that I was confronted with an image scrawled in huge letters on the wall. "F*** JEWS" was the message somebody wished to broadcast to the world, along with two giant swastikas for dramatic effect. This was written in a college restroom, in an institution where people are supposed to be educated.

There are few symbols in the world that can be as disturbing and stomach turning as the swastika. Its mere presence screams obscenity in not only the face of Jews and minorities, but also in all of those who treasure the values of tolerance and equality.

The irony of this is that in Tibet the same symbol is used to represent changelessness and eternity. However, in Western

culture it has been forever soiled by its participation as a figurehead of a murderous and evil Nazi regime.

As I stood in the bathroom stall and seethed, my mind was already racing searching for a proper scapegoat to whom I could regurgitate all of this poison onto. It was then that I had a moment of clarity which came in the form of a psychic vision.

I began to picture the poor soul who wrote this while cowering inside the safety and privacy of a bathroom stall. I wondered if he was nervous as he heard the footsteps of others outside the door, if deep inside he truly resented himself for carrying such hate inside his soul.

I questioned if he fears how disgusted his friends and teachers would be if they knew the type of scorn and malice he keeps inside, and if he even knows what a swastika is all about. Did he even fit the cookie cutter image of an Aryan or is he just a wannabe? Maybe we all hold certain prejudices that we feel the need to expose. It was only then that I realized that this individual put his hatred exactly where it belongs... in the toilet.

Jonathan Berney
Public Relations Major
Undergraduate Student

QUOTATION NATION

"We've done our duty. We fought the war. We came home wounded. Fine. But whoever the people are back here who are supposed to give us the easy transition should be doing it."

- Marine Sergeant **Ryan Groves**, who lived at the Walter Reed Medical Center for 16 months. The Hospital has been criticized after an article published in the Washington Post exposed terrible living conditions

*"I was going to talk about the other Democratic candidate John Edwards, but it turns out that you have to go into rehab if you use the word 'F***t.'"*

- Coservative Author **Ann Coulter**, using an anti-gay slur to disparage Democrat and Heterosexual John Edwards the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington D.C.

"We can't sustain the [National Guard and reserves] on the course we're on,"

- **Arnold L. Punaro**, chairman of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, on the deployment of guard troops in Iraq

"I should have used the word 'sacrificed'"

- Republican Presidential candidate **John McCain**, after saying troops lives had been "wasted" in Iraq.

"He is pro-choice, he is pro-gay marriage, and anti-gun. That's a tough combination in a Republican primary."

- Former Massachusetts Governor **Mitt Romney**, attacking rival Rudy Guliani. Both are running for the Republican nomination. Guliani is not in favor of gay marriage.



AP WIRE

BETRAYED?: Republicans in Congress and the Bush administration are fond of saying they support the troops. But soldiers returning from Iraq have found that the Veterans health care system is lacking.

Republicans fail to serve vets

CHRISTOPHER CABRAL
Opinion Editor

Army specialist George Romero wasn't happy, and he let *The Washington Post* know it.

"I hate it," said Romero of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, a place where many disabled veterans now live. "There are cockroaches...sometimes there's no heat, no water...I told my platoon sergeant I want to leave...my platoon sergeant said, 'suck it up.'"

Suck it up. Not much consolation for the disabled veterans of the Iraq war, who have been forced to live in deplorable conditions at what is supposed to be this country's top veterans hospital.

The story published on the Feb. 18 issue of *The Washington Post* shed light on a sad aspect of America's tragic war in Iraq, and reminded us that the Veterans Healthcare program greeting many of those who have returned from service is in shambles.

At first glance, the tragedy of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center may seem like an aberration, an isolated instance of governmental neglect.

When you look closer, a more startling picture emerges. The Republicans, who run the White House, and until recently ran Congress, have a shameful record when it comes to veteran's issues.

This is ironic. For the past few years, Republicans have been eager to accuse Democrats of not supporting the troops every

time they dare utter a critical word about the spiraling disaster that is the Iraq war. Republicans have strived to depict themselves as the party of defense, of the military, and of our courageous fighting men and women serving in Iraq.

Yet, the facts reveal the grim and shameful hypocrisy of a party that prefers to say nice things about soldiers than actually do anything for them.

The organization Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America examined the voting records of the 109th Congress, which ended its term in January. The organization graded each member of Congress, and the results were shocking.

The survey showed that 13 members received failing grades, and all were Republicans. Among them was Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, the leader of the Republicans and the House of Representatives until 2007.

Other Organizations were even harsher in their assessment of these "patriotic" Americans. Disabled American Veterans gave each member of Congress a score from zero to 100. The higher the score, the more they approved of the member's record on veterans' issues.

At least 170 members who are currently serving in Congress have received a zero. Every single one is a Republican. Among them are Dennis Hastert, Tom Tancredo and the current House Minority leader John Boehner (R-OH).

All 14 Republicans in the

House of Representatives from Florida were among those receiving the lowest score possible.

When they ran congress, they consistently opposed increasing veterans benefits. In March of last year they voted to cut \$155 million from the budget for veterans healthcare.

These are the same congressmen that spent \$320 million on the infamous "bridge to nowhere" in Alaska.

Sadly, this pattern of Republicans "supporting the troops" in word and not deed exists far beyond the halls of the U.S. Congress.

President Bush's proposed budget for 2008 has come under fire for requiring veterans to pay as much as \$750 to enroll in the Veterans Association healthcare program.

The President is all for sending more troops to Iraq, but the commander in chief thinks the sacrifices that they make doesn't merit free healthcare.

At least the President is consistent. He is totally opposed to universal healthcare, even when the principle applies to the veterans of the war he started.

It appears that those who spend so much time wrapping themselves in the flag and declaring their love for the troops are compensating for their own records.

The Walter Reed debacle is merely one symptom of a much larger problem; many of the men and women who run this country support the war in Iraq—not necessarily "the troops."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

University snubs Sharpton

This letter is regarding the debacle that was the Rev. Al Sharpton presentation on Friday, March 23. I was extremely disappointed to arrive at the Biscayne Bay Campus, after driving for one hour from my home to find Rev. Al Sharpton tucked away in a scarcely lit corner of the campus.

Due to the lack of advertisement on the University Park campus none of my colleagues had heard about Rev. Al Sharpton's appearance and few were present. Worst of all, after dealing with the drive in rush hour traffic, my husband and I found out that we had just missed the discussion because the program was moved back from 7 p.m. to start at 6 p.m.

I'm not sure why I hadn't heard about the change. Maybe because tickets were given away haphazardly, with no documentation of students' ID numbers, leaving no trail to contact students with scheduling changes. An announcement could have been made on the FIU website or

a general e-mail sent to students. I don't know how the information wasn't made available to everyone.

It would have been nice to actually see such a remarkable and influential speaker whose presentation I was so greatly anticipating. It would have been nice to spend my Friday evening in a rare opportunity with this community leader than driving in circles around the city in rush hour traffic. [The University has] done a great disservice to the students as well as [its] guest, who undoubtedly would have enjoyed a fuller reception if students who were crushed to find they had arrived an hour late had been able to welcome and appreciate him as intended.

Please correct me if I'm wrong in my belief that this was a poorly organized, poorly advertised waste of an opportunity.

Courtney Dowdall
Graduate Student
Comparative Sociology

Festival misrepresented

I am appalled that the editor-in-chief of the *Beacon* characterized the event-goers at our South Beach Wine and Food Festival as "the mostly drunk crowd."

Future newspaper writers must understand that words have meaning and an impact. It is against the law in the State of Florida to serve individuals who are intoxicated.

Serving intoxicated persons can result in personal fines and the loss of the liquor license of the University.

I was at almost every event and attended both grand tastings from before the tents opened until they closed. I did not observe any obviously intoxicated individuals. I did observe thousands of people who were enjoying the sun, sand, food, wine and exhibitions.

I observed many uniformed Miami Beach police who were

hired by the festival to assist us in maintaining good order and discipline. There was no one arrested for public intoxication during the entire festival.

The festival was a huge success in bringing not only money to the School, but also introducing our School to people from around the world. I am presently processing \$200,000 to be awarded to our student volunteers who contributed so much to the success of the festival.

It is saddening to see our University newspaper besmirch the good name of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Florida International University.

Joseph J. West, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Hospitality
and Tourism
Management

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CONFLICT: RESOLVED

Center keeps student conduct in check

BEN F. BADGER JR.
Staff Writer

When new students step onto campus, they are given a copy of the FIU handbook that contains rules to govern their conduct. The Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Center, located in the Graham Center, room 311, is where students could end up if they break those rules.

“There are expectations for those seeking higher education,” said Karen Dlhosh, director of the SCCRC. “We administer the student code of conduct.”

One way to look at the SCCRC is as FIU’s judicial system, even though it works somewhat differently than real courts – it can’t put students in jail and all proceedings are kept confidential.

The SCCRC’s job begins when a student or faculty member fills out an incident report form, which details the nature of the breach of the code of conduct, witnesses and the name of the offender(s).

It is important for those filling out the form to be specific as to the nature of the offense, as there has been a rise in SCCRC activity – a rise that Dlhosh attributes to the natural growth of the University. With more people on campus, the chances of misconduct increase.

Because the SCCRC does not perform its own investigation, filling out the form is crucial. All information it uses comes from the incident report and witnesses. Based on the report, the SCCRC determines whether there has been a conduct violation. If a breach has been determined, FIU will formally issue charges through the SCCRC; individuals do not file charges

against students through the SCCRC.

“We balance student rights with the expectations of the University,” Dlhosh said. “If the violation was physical in nature, it is recommended students call the FIU police primarily to secure one’s safety and, secondly, to have an official police report filed.”

Whenever police reports regarding FIU students are filed, they are forwarded to the SCCRC, thus giving the center more information for the next step in the judicial process: the hearing.

There are two types of hearings: an Administrative hearing – where one administrator will decide the outcome of the case – and a Student Conduct Committee hearing, where two students and one administrator collaborate on the outcome of the hearing.

An accused student can also stipulate the charges against him or her and accept whatever punishment is decided.

The accused may have one advisor present to give them advice during the hearing.

The advisor, however, may not speak for the student and cannot be an attorney unless the accused is also going through criminal prosecution for the same matter involved with their SCCRC hearing.

“We are set up to be a developmental process,” Dlhosh said. “It is not an ‘off with your head’ situation.”

According to Dlhosh, there are no zero-tolerance policies in effect, but the SCCRC does not take matters of assault, sexual misconduct, stalking or any other serious accusation lightly – punishment will fit the crime.

If a student is found guilty of substance abuse, for example, they may be suspended for a semester and have to undergo substance therapy as well

RESOLUTION, page 11



Dancers overcome injuries, hectic scheduling for squad

SERGIO BONILLA
Asst. Sports editor

An FIU Golden Dazzler passes out on the floor during practice, yet she smiles as she sees one of her teammates help her up while the other dancers continue their routine.

This year’s Golden Dazzlers team – FIU’s only official dance team – is continuing the tradition of aiding and guiding one another through practices, competitions and performances, a tradition that began in 1989.

Their identity as a dance team is defined by a variety of styles including pop, jazz and hip-hop. The girls begin training camp every June and periodically perform and practice each style throughout the year at University

football, volleyball and basketball games.

“It’s an 11-month commitment to be a Dazzler,” Popritkin said.

Popritkin was a Golden Dazzler dancer from 1992 to 1995 and she coached the team sporadically after graduating from FIU; her responsibilities as a Dolphins’ cheerleader captain did not allow her to coach the team full-time from 1997 to 2000. However, she departed from the Dolphins in 2000 and has coached the team full-time since 2001.

Besides performing during basketball, volleyball and football season, the Dazzlers perform at FIU-related events and externally requested events such as the Latin Grammys. They are also obliged to be full-time students enrolled in 12 credits and attend practices

six to nine hours a week.

“I believe only a former Dazzler can be coach,” Popritkin said. “Only a Dazzler knows how stressful it is.”

In April, the 22 Golden Dazzlers will be competing in the National Dance Alliance championship, which consists of a two-minute routine incorporating hip-hop, jazz and pom styles.

Since its formation, the Golden Dazzlers have always competed under Division I. The 2007 competition will be the first time the Dazzlers compete under Division 1-A, which is considerably more competitive.

The higher level of competition will change the team’s approach when scouting potential Dazzlers, a process which involves visits to high school performances.

“We’re going to be recruiting much more aggressively,” Popritkin said. “That’s what happens when you move up a level.”

The transition to compete against more talented teams has added extra pressure on this year’s team, but the members maintain each other’s morale through their friendships.

“We are like a family,” said sophomore Monica Flores, a Dazzler. “We’re always together and we learn so much about each other. We always go out, even on Thursday night when we have practice Friday morning.”

Flores is recovering from a torn ACL in her left knee. During practice, she sports a black leg brace, but she was cleared earlier this year to dance and now participates in the majority of the

practices with the team.

Her injury has not allowed her to dance with the team since May 2006, but she has remained determined throughout the rehabilitation process.

“I’ve learned not to give up after an injury,” Flores said. “So many people would just lose hope and not try to come back. My determination has proved to my teammates that you can come back from serious injury.”

Flores’ teammates helped her during her weakest physical and emotional moments. On the day she had surgery, the team visited her house to raise her spirits.

When Flores was unable to stand in a shower, her teammates aided her.

DAZZLERS, page 11

REVIEWS (YOU CAN USE)

MUSIC Robin Thicke – *The Evolution of Robin Thicke*

CHARLIE GRAU
Sports Editor

Whether it's a mellow, relaxing or romantic mood the night may call for, Robin Thicke's sophomore album, *Evolution of Robin Thicke*, will be able set the right atmosphere.

The R&B album demonstrates the amorous allure Thicke drew from idols Marvin Gaye and Jamiroquai. The added hip hop, jazz and soul influences distinguish it from traditional romantic love albums that fea-



ture the same old ballads about broken hearts.

Robin is the son of actor Alan Thicke, known primarily

for playing Dr. Jason Seaver on the '80s sitcom "Growing Pains." The elder Thicke is also credited for introducing Robin to music, seeing as he composed the themes for sitcoms such as "Diff'rent Strokes" and "The Facts of Life."

Having worked with artists like Christina Aguilera, Mya, Brandy, Marc Anthony and Jordan Knight, Thicke signed with Pharrell's record company, Star Trak Records, he immediately went to work on the album, producing most of the tracks and

even playing the piano on three songs.

Thicke's smooth vocals seem intended to make women tingle by comparing the sweetness of his life to berries and swooning in lyrics like "I guess if we have sex, our love will turn to wine," in his first song off the album "Wanna Love You Girl." Thicke first hooked up with Pharrell of The Neptunes to produce the hit single.

The album features guest appearances from Lil' Wayne, Faith Evans and Pharrell, even

though Thicke carries most of the album through his catchy lyrics and sensual voice.

With the combination of his songwriting, vocals and unique beats, fans will rarely hit the skip button as all the tracks will help create any environment one would want to share with their special someone.

Thicke is currently touring the country opening up for John Legend and performing with India.Arie. It won't be too long before somebody else will be opening the show for him.

MOVIE 300

GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Asst. Life! Editor

Spartans and Persians collide for two hours in the testosterone-driven *300*, an epic retelling the battle of Thermopylae where a Spartan contingent of 300 men tries to hold off the seemingly innumerable Persian army.

The film, scheduled for theatrical release March 9 and adapted from the graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller (*Sin City*), is an epic war movie in its truest form: bloody, breathtaking and unrelenting.

Featuring stellar performances by lead actors Gerard Butler (*Phantom of the Opera*) and Rodrigo

Santoro (*Love Actually*), who play Spartan King Leonidas and Persian King Xerxes, respectively. The battle-ready film will inspire audiences to visit their local armory or at least strike the nearest object.

Visually, *300* is stunning, due in part to the use of blue screen for many of the movie's scenes. When Leonidas and his men first see the Persian enemy approaching in the distance as smoke and dirt are kicked up from under their feet, one can't help but anticipate the ensuing battle, which is pure visual candy, albeit too bloody for the squeamish.

Aside from the use of blue screen, director Zack Snyder (*Dawn of the Dead*) uses a technique nicknamed "the crush," giving *300* a

photographic look by manipulating the color balance and contrast ratio of the film.

Butler, who played the Phantom in the 2004 Joel Schumacher version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, gives the war epic's best performance, convincingly leading his small group of determined men against a mammoth army.

To physically prepare for the film, Butler worked with former professional mountain-climber Mark Twight, who trained him and the rest of the cast by coordinating workout sessions involving the use of medicine balls and kettle bells.

The results of such physical training are evident: Butler and the cast look terrific and truly resemble warriors who were born to



COURTESY PHOTO

fight.

Comparably, Santoro does an excellent job of portraying the half-naked and sexually ambiguous Xerxes. Although he doesn't have as much screen time as Butler, Santoro dominates any scene he is in, especially with his commanding voice.

Santoro also deserves credit for being able to wear such a heavy costume – his was made entirely of metal

as opposed to cloth.

Despite strong performances by the cast, the movie has a distinct flaw: the story's constant shifting from the action-packed fights between the Spartans and Persians to the dialogue-driven happenings in Sparta.

Although it's nice to know that Sparta still exists while the men are away fighting, the abrupt shifts kill

the adrenaline rush induced by watching someone get decapitated or stabbed for the 40th time.

Nevertheless, if audiences want to feel as if they can take on the world, *300* is the movie to watch. In terms of action, captivating visuals, bloodshed and more bloodshed, it delivers a powerful and satisfying blow worthy of a Spartan soldier.

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Golden Dazzlers find unity, strength in numbers

DAZZLERS, page 9

“They took me to a sink and washed my hair,” Flores said.

Her teammates’ attentiveness left Flores with a gracious outlook.

“I’m always telling them now not to be lazy and appreciate dance while

you can,” Flores said. “It can be taken from you so easily.”

Her team captain, junior Shea McM Mayo, who has been with the team for three years, also shares Flores’ leadership attitude. Although she is a performer, she considers herself shy. Her teammates’ presence,

however, eases the pressures of performing in front of large crowds.

“Dancing with the team helps my confidence so much,” McM Mayo said. “My teammates around me give me support.”

As team captain, McM Mayo has to lead both veteran members as well

as newer members such as sophomore Vanessa Marrero. Marrero understands the dedication and time management required to be part of the Dazzlers.

“Being a Dazzler makes you face reality,” Marrero said. “It sets you for life because if you can get through this, then you can

get through anything.”

This year, Popritkin grouped 22 personalities to form a team that works together, struggles together, laughs together and dances together during 11 months of the year.

“Being a Dazzler isn’t as easy as it looks,” Popritkin said.

“... If you can get through this, then you can get through anything.”

– Vanessa Marrero

Center to co-sponsor initiative promoting ethics, civility

RESOLUTION, page 9

as being evicted if they live on campus.

The maximum penalty the SCCRC can impose on a student is a permanent expulsion from the University.

In efforts to avoid students breaking the codes of conduct, the SCCRC has been conducting edu-

cational workshops in Freshman Experience classes. Thus far, more than 900 students have participated in the 36 presentations, according to Dlhosh.

On Feb. 20, the SCCRC co-sponsored a program with Multicultural Programs and Services and the Student Government Association called “The ___ Word (The Power of Derogatory Names).”

The discussion was about why people use derogatory words to describe one another.

In March, the SCCRC, in conjunction with other FIU organizations, will host the Civility Initiative.

“This is the first time that FIU as a community has started to focus on programming that solely targets student responsibility, ethics and

civility,” said Shawna McNair, a graduate assistant for the SCCRC. “We feel this is a great opportunity to help create programs that speak to students about good citizenship and campus responsibility.”

The overall goal of the Civility Initiative is to promote awareness about the student code of standards that follow students everywhere they go, according to Dlhosh.

If a student is unsure about the student rules of misconduct they can speak with a representative in the SCCRC, which is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – noon and 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. The incident report form is available in GC 311 or online at www.fiu.edu/~sccr. If victims want to report a crime on campus, contact FIU Public Safety at 305-348-5911.

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College of Engineering & Computing

Jekabsone and Adley lead Golden Panthers to victory

WOMEN, page 16

Adley said her nine points, most which came in the post, were not a big deal.

"I have to play against Lasma every day in practice; she's 6'4. It's nothing," Adley said.

The Golden Panthers will travel to Lafayette, La., to face the No. 2 seed Ragin' Cajuns in quarterfinal action Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

The Golden Panthers lost both games to Louisiana-Lafayette in the regular season.

"We got to do a lot of things differently and better. We can't let them control the boards like they did. They literally man-handled us. We got to stop them in transition, play harder and much more physical," Russo said. "We have nothing to lose. Everyone's going to have to put their bodies on the line. If we can physically combat with them, we can beat them."



JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

SKIRMISH: Sophomore guard Iva Ciglar was contained shooting 1-for-10 from the field. The margin of points in the point and free-throw shooting was the difference in the game.

FIU 61, TROY 49

FIU	FG	FT	REB	A	TO	PTS	MIN
Ciglar, Iva	1-10	2-2	3	6	2	4	38
Jekabsone, Lasma	7-8	9-9	8	2	6	23	37
Makela, Eva	0-2	0-2	2	0	1	0	23
Bernsone, Liene	2-3	0-1	7	0	1	4	24
Ferguson, LaQuetta	5-14	0-0	5	4	3	11	37
Bosilj, Monika	4-6	0-0	2	0	0	8	17
Adley, Marquita	2-5	5-5	6	1	0	9	20
Neal, Asha	1-2	0-0	0	0	0	2	4
Team Totals	22-50	16-19	35	13	13	61	200

TROY	FG	FT	REB	A	TO	PTS	MIN
Roper, Larelle	3-5	0-0	6	3	2	6	40
Lewis, Amy	4-18	1-2	3	1	2	11	40
Shearing, Alyce	3-7	0-0	2	0	4	6	19
Morrissy, Kylie	6-12	3-3	5	2	3	16	40
Realph, Danielle	1-5	0-0	6	0	1	2	21
Scott, Brandi	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	2
Davis, Brittanie	0-2	0-0	3	1	2	1	17
Hairston, Valensia	1-2	0-0	0	0	0	1	5
Lawrence, Zena	3-3	0-0	1	1	1	4	16
Team Totals	21-56	4-5	30	8	15	19	200

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Bus accident leaves six dead and twenty-nine injured

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students, faculty and staff. We know these people on a first-name basis," he said. "For now we're pulling together and supporting each other as best we can."

On campus, students and residents of the community filled the school's basketball gym to grieve together and learn more about what had happened. Some wiped away tears as they came in. The university, with about 1,150 students 50 miles south of Toledo, is affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA.

The baseball team had been scheduled to play its first game of the season in Sarasota, Fla., Saturday against Eastern Mennonite College of Harrisonburg, Va., and it had eight more games scheduled in Fort Myers, Fla.

Cobb said the bus was southbound on I-75 when it crashed about 5:30 a.m. The driver may have mistaken an exit ramp for a lane, he said. It was dark at the time, but the weather was clear when the bus went

off the bridge and landed on its side in the southbound lanes of the interstate.

The National Transportation Safety Board was called in to investigate.

Five fire trucks were at the scene as firefighters pulled crash victims through the roof of the bus.

Baseball equipment bags littered the scene after the crash, and luggage spilled from the vehicle when it was set right side up.

When the bus was righted, it was clear that all the windows on the driver's side had been shattered, and there was considerable damage on the front of the bus and on the roof above the driver's seat.

Calls Friday to the charter company, Executive Coach Luxury Travel Inc. of Ottawa, Ohio, were not immediately returned. Harder said the school had used the company in the past.

Steve Rogers, a Bluffton University assistant football coach, said he was working out in the weight room with members of the football team around 6 a.m. when



GENE BLYTHE/AP PHOTO

TRAGEDY: The Bluffton University baseball team bus careened off a highway ramp in Atlanta leaving six dead and 29 injured.

they saw news of the bus crash on television. When they saw the markings on the bus, "that's when reality hit everybody," he said.

His players started calling friends on the baseball team, trying to reach some by cell phone.

"It hits home harder than it would if it had happened at a bigger school. Everybody knows each other," he said.

Matt Ferguson, a freshman on the baseball team from Pleasant Hill, Ohio, said most of the freshman position players stayed behind.

"We were bummed out we didn't get to go. Now, we don't know what to think," he said.

The team is close-knit, he said. "It's one huge family. We spend all day together. We go to classes together. We do everything together."

At a chapel service the night before, students had offered a prayer for their sports teams and other students to travel safely over spring break, said Barrington, a junior from Brooklyn Heights, Ohio.

"Sometimes you take that stuff for granted," she said.

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Men's basketball exits early from conference tournament

RENALDO SMITH
Staff Writer

For the Golden Panthers (12-17), the most consistent attribute of the season didn't come in the form of free-throw shooting, 3-point shooting, rebounding or even defense.

It came in the form of two things that can't be reflected on a stat sheet: heart and hustle.

Using those two elements, the Golden Panthers left it all out on the floor in a disheartening 91-88 overtime loss to the Florida Atlantic Owls (16-14) in the opening round of the Sunbelt Conference Tournament on Feb. 28, in Boca Raton.

With all odds against them in a hostile environment, the Golden Panthers appeared to be anything but rattled early on.

Their team play allowed them to tap into an unlikely offensive force in freshman center Nikola Gacesa. Although the Serbian has made big plays over the course of the season, he played with the confidence of a go-to man when they needed him to.

After capitalizing on an early lay-up in the paint to establish an inside threat, Gacesa, who finished the first half with nine points, drilled a 3-pointer to give FIU an early 10-8 advantage. Following Gacesa's lead, the rest of the team shared the offensive load early.

Defensive specialist Chris Fuller hit a couple of jumpers, senior guard Johwen Villegas was aggressive in the lane and sophomore forward Alex Galindo chipped in with five early points. Despite the

Golden Panthers' strong play, the Owls still managed to stay in the game thanks in no small part to Carlos Munroe.

With everyone else on his team struggling, Munroe took matters into his own hands as he caught fire from the field.

It was his 14 points on 7-for-11 shooting that pulled the Owls within two points heading into the second half, 36-34.

After nine lead changes in the opening half, the up-and-down theme continued.

Villegas and freshman

point guard Erick Nsangou shot the ball well for the Golden Panthers, while guard DeAndre Rice appeared to have an extra pep in his step for the Owls. After Fuller and Villegas took turns draining jumpers, Galindo converted a three-point play to give the Golden Panthers a comfortable 70-61 lead with 7:25 remaining.

Sensing the game slipping away, Rice led the Owls on a 12-2 run to gain a slim 73-72 lead. Galindo buried a big 3-pointer to put the Golden

Panthers up 82-80, but Rice cashed in two from the charity stripe to tie the game at the end of regulation.

In the extra period the Owls just seemed one step faster. After point guard Michael James hit a lay-up to give the Golden Panthers an 88-86 lead with just over two minutes left, the Owls took over.

After Fuller missed the go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds remaining, Owls big man Paul Graham sealed the deal with a dunk.

The Golden Panthers finished with five players in doubled figures led by Villegas' 19 on 7-for-15 shooting from the field.

Fuller finished with 17 points and seven rebounds. Nsangou used a big second half to finish with 17, Galindo had 15 and Gacesa chipped in with 11. For the Owls, Munroe delivered a dominating 26-point, 15-rebound night, and Rice had 23 points and five assists.

The Golden Panthers were outscored 54-30 in the paint

and were out-rebounded 43-33.

"If we got a couple more rebounds at the end, we win the basketball game," coach Rouco said.

Meanwhile, the Golden Panthers will look forward to a season with Galindo and Fuller at the forefront, minus seniors Villegas and forward Facundo Giorgi.

"This is the beginning of something very special," coach Rouco said. I just feel bad for Facundo and Johwen that they are not going to



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Women's basketball team moves on to next round of conference play

MAGALLY ESTRELLA
Staff Writer

The women's basketball team defeated Troy 61-49 at home on Feb. 28 and will play in the second round of the 2007 Sun Belt Conference Women's Basketball Championship.

The Golden Panthers (16-13) pulled through and snapped a four-game losing streak that couldn't have come at a better time.

The win marked their third victory against Troy this season.

Senior center Lasma Jekabsone led all scorers with a game-high 23 points, including 14 in the second half aiding the Golden Panthers to victory.

The Trojans (12-17) got off to a strong start and opened up an eight-point lead, 16-8, in the first eight minutes of the game, but the Golden Panthers overpowered the Ragin' Cajuns the second half, as they pulled away by 12 points to seal the win.

The Golden Panthers dominated the boards and scored more points in the paint compared to Troy, who struggled offensively and couldn't take advantage of the Golden Panthers' 13 turnovers.

"They can't stop it. It's really a no-brainer. You got to go inside to win," coach

Cindy Russo said. "It's hard, they don't have the man power to stop our post play."

Jekabsone added a game-high eight rebounds and had an overall great performance.

"I was just shooting the ball over my defender the whole game," she said.

Junior guard LaQuetta Ferguson scored in double digits for the 13th straight game this season with 11 points.

Although she struggled from the floor during the first half, she pulled through for the Golden Panthers with back-to-back field goals with under two minutes left in the game, including the team's only 3-pointer at the end of the game, stretching their lead to 10 points.

"When you got teammates rebounding, it doesn't matter how many [3-pointers] you make or how many you miss as long as you make it up on the defensive side of the floor," Ferguson said.

Helping Jekabsone and Ferguson was sophomore forward Marquita Adley, who provided a strong presence in the post. Coming off the bench, teammates looked for her, feeding her the ball in the post, which either resulted in an easy field goal or a foul charged to a Troy defender.

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JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

MOVING UP: Senior center Lasma Jekabsone recorded a game-high 23 points on route to a 61-49 victory over Troy. With the victory the Golden Panthers advance to the Sun Belt Conference quarterfinals.

DRAFT STOCK



JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

POTENTIAL PRO: Former Golden Panther defensive end Antwan Barnes finished second among linebackers in the 40-yard dash (4.42 sec.) and benching (31 reps) drills at the NFL combine held Feb. 22-27 in Indianapolis, Ind.

Bluffton University baseball team suffers loss

DANIEL YEE
AP Wire

A charter bus carrying a college baseball team from Ohio plunged off a highway ramp early Friday and slammed into the pavement below, killing six people, injuring 29 and scattering sports equipment across the road, authorities said.

The bus, carrying the team from the close-knit, Mennonite-affiliated Bluffton University, toppled off the Northside Drive bridge onto a pickup truck on Interstate 75 shortly before dawn, police spokesman Joe Cobb said.

"It looked to me like a big slab of concrete falling down," said truck driver Danny Lloyd, 57, of Frostburg, Md. "I didn't recognize it was a bus. I think when I saw the thing coming, I think I closed my eyes and stepped on the gas."

The impact broke his windshield, pushed his truck into the concrete and wrecked the front bumper, but Lloyd wasn't injured.

Four students, the bus driver and the bus driver's wife were killed, said police Maj. Calvin Moss.

A.J. Ramthun, an 18-year-old second baseman, was asleep in a window seat when the bus hit the overpass wall, jolting him awake.

"I just looked out and saw the road coming up at me. I remember the catcher tapping me on the head, telling me to get out because there was gas all over," he told reporters.

His brother, a fellow team member, was trapped underneath the bus and damaged his hip. "He might not recover from that," Ramthun said. He said his own collarbone was broken and he had to get stitches in his face.

Nineteen students - three in critical condition - were being treated at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Dr. Leon Haley said. He said all but two students were awake and talking Friday morning, and doctors were checking them for broken bones.

"All things considered, they are pretty calm," Haley said. "They are very aware of what's going on."

Three other injured people were taken to Piedmont Hospital, and seven were taken to Atlanta Medical Center, Haley said.

Piedmont hospital spokeswoman Diana Lewis said the team's coach, James Grandey, 29, was in serious condition and expected to improve.

"This is a profound and tragic day in the life of Bluffton University," school President James Harder told reporters Friday morning in Ohio.

Classes were canceled, and the school called off other sports trips planned during next week's spring break, Harder said. He said he had no details on the identities of those killed and injured.

"This is deeply impacting all of our

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