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Golden Panthers may lose their gild
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SPOTLIGHT

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Stretch your stress away at FIU's Yoga Club.

SPORTS PAGE 8



Men's hoops heads into last eight games of the season, looking for momentum.

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SGC-BBC comptroller shares job responsibilities and plans for future.

LIFE! PAGE 5

COLUMN: Jonathan Davila looks at video game offerings for early 2009.

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New baseball assistant gets to know players; believes he can help in recruiting department.

OPINION PAGE 4



Gitmo's closing on Guantanamo Bay signals a beginning step in the right direction for America.

AT THE BAY PAGE 3

Dean agrees to be BBC vice provost, promising campus improvements despite limited budget and dual positions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Eagle Eye, Today, Jan. 30, 6 p.m.: Bring your friends or have a date without emptying your wallet, and enjoy this cheap thrill tonight at GC.

South Florida Indy Film Festival, Today, Jan. 30.: Tired of the same old Hollywood films with the same old predictable plots? Then welcome to the independent film world!

Monster Jam, Jan. 31, 7:30 p.m.: Enjoy a testosterone-filled event at Dolphin Stadium.

The Wedding Singer: the musical, Jan. 31, 7:30 p.m. Spend a Saturday night basking in all the bad hair and New Wave tunes from the 80s at the Miniaci Performing Arts Center.

Super Bowl Party, Feb. 1, 6 p.m.: Oh yeah baby, come and watch a bunch of sweaty, humungous guys get down and dirty at Mike's in Venetia.

For the complete calendar, please see page 6 or visit FIUSM.com/calendar.

WEATHER



FRIDAY
PM showers
LOW: 47 HIGH: 74



SATURDAY
Sunny
LOW: 66 HIGH: 52



SUNDAY
Scattered showers
LOW: 60 HIGH: 71

CONTACTS

Editor in Chief 305-348-1580
chris.necuze@fiusm.com
UP Office 305-348-2709
news@fiusm.com
BBC Office 305-919-4722
bbc@fiusm.com
Tips & Corrections 305-348-2709
tips@fiusm.com
Advertising 305-348-6994
advertising@fiusm.com

Mayoral candidate's campaign begins in Graham Center

JONATHAN DAVILA
Staff Writer

A candidate nominated by the Miami-based Socialist Workers Party to run for city of Miami mayor in November began his campaign at the University last week.

Omari Musa, who was on the ballot for the same office in 2005, sat at an information table inside the Graham Center on Jan. 21. He handed out fliers and spoke to passersby about issues he hopes to address.

"The first thing I would do is introduce a resolution and organize people to demand jobs for all," he said in an interview with *The Beacon*. "We call for a mass program of public works."

The public works program would include the building of schools, day-care centers, housing and the reconstruction of bridges and roads, according to Musa.

The idea of such a large program raised questions about the project's feasibility.

"His ideas – they sound like they are not grounded in reality.



JONATHAN DAVILA/THE BEACON

EARLY CAMPAIGN: City of Miami mayor candidate, Omari Musa, speaks to Francisco De la Torre, history major, about his campaign.

"They're not practical," said Chris Cabral, co-president of the College Democrats and Student Government Association senator. "The city of Miami mayor does not have the power or the funds to do all of that stuff. It's completely unrealistic."

Juanqy Robaina, the executive director for the Florida Federation of College Republicans, also questioned whether such a project would be financially possible.

"It's all great and good, but

it's a lot of money. Where will the money come from?" he said. "It sounds like an example of someone who is overreaching their boundaries in order to get elected."

Musa said the money would come from the more affluent families in the country.

"We've got millions of people in the United States, literally millions, who live off of the

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SGC-UP COMPTROLLER

Chung brings mastery to post

DAVID BARRIOS
Senior Staff Writer

Robert Chung sits behind a bookshelf in a small office he shares with Student Government Council at University Park Senate Speaker Jean Roseme. Inside the bookshelf are countless notebooks filled with budget information and procedures left by his predecessors.

The 24-year-old Chung, born in Jamaica with parents from Hong Kong, is the comptroller of SGC-UP.

"He came into this position with a lot of passion," said Roseme. "He's constantly researching other universities and benchmarking our financial progress and he's done a great job."

Chung was originally approached for his job by Chief of Staff Anthony Rionda.

"He had a good background with the College of Arts and Sciences as treasurer for the Council for Student Organizations," said Rionda. "He also had a good business background and he even had an internship with Caterpillar tractors. He's one of those

guys you can count on to do their part and do it right."

Jan. 27 was the last day for University departments to submit budget requests to SGA.

The rest of the semester will be spent organizing and passing the 2009-2010 budgets for SGA. The budget for the 2008-2009 school year was \$9.6 million; the budget for 2009-2010 has yet to be finalized.

"We have various [budget] hearings coming up," said Chung, a finance major.

Budget requests come from all of the departments at the University that are funded by SGA.

Hearings for University-wide student service departments will be held in a joint meeting early in February. Fees for orientation and welcome back week, for example, are considered University-wide fees since they involve both campuses.

However, for a department like career services, which has an office at both the UP and BBC campuses, the budgets are divided between the respective campuses.

"Last year, they came in under University-wide hearings but, this year, because they want a more flexible budget, they'll now be heard at campus specific hearings," Chung said. "Once we have all of the figures in mind, we'll set

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FACULTY SENATE

Auxiliaries crucial for fund raising

JULIO MENACHE
Staff Writer

At a Jan. 27 Faculty Senate meeting, Kathleen Blais, chairwoman of the Budget Committee, alongside Vice President and CFO Vivian Sanchez, stressed there is a need to expand the auxiliaries, which are self-supporting entities that provide a service for students, faculty and staff.

Auxiliary enterprises may play a pivotal role in helping the University cope with the current economic recession.

The Department of Parking and Transportation and the bookstore are examples of such entities.

"If we expand auxiliaries, it will make for better services and it will allow us to make more money," Sanchez told Senate members.

Blais and Sanchez both called for an increase in auxiliary funds and in faculty "securing contracts and grants."

Sanchez revealed in her presentation on the budget that the University will experience an estimated \$12.5 million cut in state funds.

FIU could see an even steeper state cut of \$46.2 million in funds for 2009-2010 as the recession continues to grip the country.

One major source of state funds that is expected to decrease is lottery funds, \$6 million of which is usually allotted for the

FACULTY, page 2

Vice provost agrees to stay until 2010

DIANELYS MARTINEZ
Staff Writer

Joseph West, dean of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and interim vice provost for the Biscayne Bay Campus, has agreed to be the vice provost for BBC through August 2010.

West had planned to stay through August 2009 as both dean and interim vice provost, extending his previous plans to step down as dean in August 2008.

"I'm happy because it is necessary and I'm happy that I can do it," said West. "It would be nice to be on sabbatical now, but I understand the situation. We have budget cuts, we're constrained; this is a

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NEWS FLASH

FIU

Cuban generation documentary to be presented

FIU's Cuban Research Institute, along with the University of Miami's Latin American Studies Program and the Center for Latin American Studies, will be presenting a screening of a documentary titled *El Telón de Azúcar* (*The Sugar Curtain*) on Jan. 31.

The documentary, directed by Camila Guzman Urzua, shows present day Cuba through the eyes of citizens who lived there during the 70s and 80s when the Cuban regime was at its economic best, according to a press release. The screening will take place at 5 p.m. at the Bill Cosford Cinema at UM located on Miller Drive in Coral Gables. It is free and open to the public.

LOCAL

Broward schools brace for more budget cuts

After months of tapping into the reserves and being able to manage its budget with slight cuts, the Broward School Board will have to make bigger cuts that include cancelling programs and eliminating jobs.

The district had to cut approximately \$130 million from its \$2 billion operating budget in the past year but expects another \$140 million to be cut next year. The elimination of some high school sports, transportation to magnet schools, cutting the number of days all employees work and eliminating jobs are all on the table, according to an article in *The Miami Herald*. The Board will have a series of workshops in the coming months to find ways to cut and spare certain programs.

NATIONAL

Federal Reserve rates near zero

The Federal Reserve kept its key interest rate near zero percent on Jan. 28, and said it is prepared to take additional steps to try to fix the troubled U.S. economy and credit markets. They are also ready to purchase longer term treasuries if it determines that such a move will help get credit flowing once again.

The FR's statement came two days before the Commerce Department is due to report on the pace of the nation's economy in the last few months of 2008.

—Compiled by Paulo O'Swath

STUDENT GOVERNMENT COUNCIL AT UNIVERSITY PARK

Refining election process a priority

DAVID BARRIOS
Senior Staff Writer

The Student Government Council at University Park Senate meeting that took place Jan. 26 was filled with debate as tensions mounted throughout the meeting, stemming from the upcoming elections to fill 10 currently open seats.

After hearing a speech from a candidate deemed ineligible to be elected for the Senate due to a lack of credits, the Senate asked to postpone election hearings until it convenes on Feb. 2.

Senators discussed issues such as reopening the application process until next week's meeting because candidates seemed unaware of the deadline to turn in applications.

It was determined, however, that according to constitutional bylaw, no application is necessary to be elected as a senator.

"Elections were supposed to happen today," said Paige LaPointe, SGC-UP vice president to the Senate. "This makes the Senate look down as a whole simply because people are here, waiting to be elected. You look very unorganized. Half the people that are qualified to run are not here today. I don't think that it's fair to open up applications

again simply because those that applied on deadline did their work."

"We've only got three months left," emphasized David Dial, senator for the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. "We've got so many things that need to be done."

Part of the meeting's process included a disagreement with what was going on with the election process, according to Jose Toscano, SGA advisor.

"There should have been a ruling today," he said. "We have people here who were marketed to and did want to be a part of the Senate and you all could have simply voted [the candidate] down."

General elections in SGA, by precedent, are held during late March or early April. However, according to the constitution, special elections can be held to fill vacant seats and can be voted for and held at any meeting.

"The only thing is that the procedure defining how the process for these types of elections goes is what we need to look into improving," said Jean Roseme, Senate speaker.

Roseme promised the Senate would step up efforts to get its goals completed. He noted that this was the first year in which Senate meetings

were not being chaired by the SGC-UP president, citing that there would be problems in the transition as the Senate learned to make the election process more efficient.

"What happened yesterday was completely within the senators' rights. If the Senate doesn't feel that it is ready to vote, then it does not have to," Roseme said.

"There are a lot of bad things that you can take away from Monday's meeting but there are good things that you can take away from it as well. We actually debated something," said Chris Cabral, senator from the College of Arts and Sciences.

When the meeting convened that afternoon, several resolutions were read in the chambers, the majority of them being proposed several months ago. Among these was a recommendation by the council to University administration that the athletics employee involved in an incident, in which an FIU student was struck down during a football game, should face a stricter and harsher punishment. Their recommendation included possible termination of his job.

Foundation explores alternate funding

FACULTY, page 1

University.

"There are a lot less people playing lotto, which means lotto money may also disappear for the University," Sanchez said in her report.

"I think we all need to have an understanding of where money for the University comes from," Blais said. "It comes from the state and it's not enough. In fact, it's getting less everyday."

Blais and Sanchez also mentioned that one of the areas hit hard by the recession included the FIU Foundation Inc., a non-profit organization in charge of soliciting and encouraging funds for the University.

According to Sanchez, because of the economic downturn, the foundation faced a 23 percent loss, leading for the

rally call for new sources of revenue.

"Our endowments do not have enough money," Sanchez said.

Sanchez also explained that whenever students eat at one of the University's auxiliaries, such as Starbucks, it generates money for the University.

Other successful fund-raising services that Sanchez mentioned were the bookstore, which just last year raised \$250,000 and the Department of Parking and Transportation, which raises \$25 for every University license plate sold.

Blais and Sanchez told Senate members of an idea to raise revenue, in which car bumpers will be used to advertise for different companies. Sanchez estimates that, in the parking garages alone, about \$250,000 could be generated for the University through this venture.

"State revenues are going down. It'll be a while before they come back up again," Blais said. "So we have to do our part to make other sources of revenue that we have some ability to influence."

Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald Berkman mentioned the possibility of a one day furlough during spring break for University employees.

Berkman said he is looking at other universities that have employed this method and that discussions are still ongoing, yet he mentioned the benefits of the plan.

"If [University employees] took a one day furlough, it would yield \$1 million for the University," he said.

Berkman also looked to quell the fears of faculty senators of any upcoming staff layoff or program closures. He claims he has not discussed any staff layoffs.

SGC-UP comptroller reviews financial codes

SGA, page 1

an approved preliminary budget, before it's supposed to be submitted to Rosa Jones [Vice President of Student Affairs]. Once SGA has approved the budget, it goes from us to Jones who will approve the budget for the fiscal year."

Chung is also a member of SGC-UP's finance committee, chaired by Senator Andrew Sanchez.

"We take on appropriation and work on requests from the student population. For example, the Recreation Center requested some funds for exercise machines. And we just look into it and make a decision," Chung said.

Chung has also been looking

into updating the financial code of the SGA constitution which has not been updated since 2005.

"In the past, the regulations were not fully elaborated," Chung said. "We're making sure that [activities and service] fees are being used for proper reasons."

Chung noted that certain organizations have spent A&S funds in the past to pay for gift items to reward or honor a single member or officer – a practice that he is against.

"A&S fees are from the student body," Chung said. "They come from \$10.52 per credit hour from me and from all of the student body and it wouldn't be appropriate to spend money on things like that."

Socialist Party leader joins mayoral race

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surplus value that working people produce. We'll tax them," he said.

Shortening the workweek with no cut in pay, unconditional legalization for all immigrants and an end to the U.S. embargo against Cuba are other issues that Musa is campaigning on.

He is a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party and was a founding member of the National Black Independent Political Party in 1980. Aside from running for city of Miami mayor in 2005, he ran for Florida governor in 2006 and District 17 congressman in 2004.

Miami commissioners Joe Sanchez and Tomás Regalado, as well as lesser-known candidate Juan Miguel Alfonso, are also running for city of Miami mayor.

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Dean West accepts vice provost appointment

BBC, page 1

difficult time. I can do the job."

August 2010 will be his 11th year as dean of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

As vice provost, West has five projects underway.

Surveys were sent out to students, faculty and staff about the services offered at BBC, as well as their perceptions of the level of professionalism from all departments, including the office of vice provost. The survey results will be reviewed by the office of vice provost, and if needed, changes will be made to campus services.

Every two weeks, beginning Jan. 30, six classes have been scheduled to provide customer service training for BBC employees, though they are not mandatory. The classes alternate between mornings and afternoons, and four of them are already full with a total of

30 employees each.

One of West's other projects involves an environmental initiative to make BBC more environmentally friendly. Jennifer Grimm, the environmental coordinator for BBC, was hired for this purpose as well as other environmental projects.

For the next two years,

grottos where students can read, relax and think.

"We want this campus to have the feel of a small liberal arts college," West said.

He has also been speaking with several deans about bringing more programs to BBC, including Dr. John A. Rock, dean for the College

the UP campus and BBC.

Some plans of expansion include a hotel by the Kovens Conference Center and a new residence hall.

According to West, both the vice provost and Hospitality and Tourism Management teams have efficient staff members who will ultimately help the projects be

We want this campus to have the feel of a small liberal arts college ... By the time I leave, I'm planning to have more programs here.

Joseph West, vice provost
Biscayne Bay Campus

projects will be developed with the help of the Department of Environmental Resource Management to return BBC to its native habitat, according to West. \$50,000 have already been raised to begin landscaping the entry way of the campus.

West wants to create meditation areas, with

of Medicine at the University Park campus. According to West, they are now meeting about getting classroom and office space.

"By the time I leave, I'm planning to have more programs here," West said.

The University hired an architectural firm, Perkins + Will, to develop a master plan of five years for both

realized.

"That's another reason I decided to do it, because I recognize the strength of both of the teams."

After stepping down August 2010, West will be on sabbatical, but will come back August 2011 to teach Hospitality Leadership, the capstone course he currently teaches.



NATHAN VALENTINE/THE BEACON

FIRST WORDS: Vice Provost Joseph West spoke at the Biscayne Bay Campus Aquatic Complex re-opening ceremony on Jan. 22.

SGC-BBC COMPTROLLER

Becerra-Pineda to work on updating procedures, rules

BARBARA QUIJANO
Staff Writer

Carlos Becerra-Pineda knew he always liked handling numbers in math class and now he handles the numbers of the Biscayne Bay Campus Student Government Council.

"I like numbers and the idea of handling finances," said Becerra-Pineda, a sophomore international business major.

"I was an intern last year for Jonathan Doozan, last year's comptroller, and in the fall I got elected. I met Ana Maria Silva, SGC-BBC President, while interning, and she knew I was good with numbers and accounting."

Since June of 2008, Becerra-Pineda has been the SGC-BBC comptroller and with his position have come several financial challenges.

"You have to be a genius to make it through the semester with the budget you have," said Rashida Cohen, SGC-BBC Housing senator, to Becerra-Pineda.

With a grand total of \$9,599,124 being allocated to the Student Government Association by the Activities and Service Fees budget, \$553,055

was appropriated to SGC-BBC and Broward Pines campuses for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

The comptroller is responsible for assisting SGC-BBC Vice President Kenasha Paul in the management and disbursement of SGC-BBC funds, as well as auditing SGA committees, councils and departments to ensure proper spending practices, according to the SGA constitution.

As comptroller, Becerra-Pineda also attends finance committee meetings, executive board meetings, where council members discuss what each has planned, and what each is currently working on, and weekly general meetings with the rest of the council, to which students are welcome to attend to overview ideas, concerns and resolutions.

Becerra-Pineda is also responsible for verifying SGC-BBC Financial Proposal forms that need to be processed. These proposal forms go to the finance committee when unappropriated money is requested for a particular event.

Becerra-Pineda also processes File for Funds, reports that give organizations and clubs permission to use

funds from their appropriated budget.

"We [the finance committee] have been working on finance codes to update procedures, positions, rules and Florida statutes. These rules and Florida statutes regard the Activities and Service Fees budget, which is the main funding for SGA. Our [BBC] budget comes from there," Becerra-Pineda said.

In deciding how the money will be used, a hearing, followed by a deliberation, takes place. During the hearing, representatives of organizations present the amount of funding needed.

"In approval of hearings we want to have a fair distribution of the budget for next year, not to waste money on events that cater to a selected portion, but rather, to the whole student body, and allocate funds we receive the best way possible," Becerra-Pineda said.

"He's a great guy, I share an office with him," said Paul. "He's meticulous at making sure that the students money are being represented accordingly."

The most recent version of the Finance Codes, which regard the A&S fees, are from 1999, so Becerra-Pineda and Robert Chung, SGC-

A DAY TO REMEMBER



NATHAN VALENTINE/THE BEACON

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES: Ivy Siegel, coordinator of Campus Life and Orientation, arranged Holocaust images in the Wolfe University Center halls for International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Jan. 27, marking the 64th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp in Auschwitz, Germany.

UP comptroller, have been working together to update the codes to apply to the University as a whole.

"I want to finish the Finance Codes this semester so they can be used for the upcoming years, as well as keep track of the budget [by] not spending too much on things that don't benefit the students," Becerra-Pineda said.

Born April 12, 1989, and raised in Bogota, Colombia, Becerra-Pineda has come a long way. He lived in Mexico City, Mexico, for six months because his mother worked in TV Azteca, "one of the main TV stations in Mexico,"

according to Becerra-Pineda. Arriving in Miami in 2002, Becerra graduated in 2007 with honors from Miami Senior High School, where he was a member of the law club.

He plans to minor in global entrepreneurship and ultimately "go wherever destiny takes me."

"The good aspect of Miami is that you feel more secure and safe. It's not corrupt, or at least we hope it's not, and the transportation is so much different; everything works better here." Becerra-Pineda said. "The first three months were difficult, getting used to the customs and language, but

when I met people from Latin America, it got better."

Aside from being a student and SGC-BBC member, Becerra-Pineda is an employee of the Armani Exchange store in Aventura Mall.

"SGA is the only organization I'm a part of, so it's helped me get involved in the aspect of student life," said Becerra-Pineda, who also added that SGA has provided networking opportunities and has given him a sense of responsibility.

"He's the man for the job," said Emmanuel Osemota, Undergraduate General senator. "He is a diligent and hard-working individual."

IN-STORE ★ INJUSTICE

Wal-Mart's image stained with discrimination cases

ODETTE BARRIENTOS
Staff Writer

Usually Wal-Mart stores' low prices are everywhere. Yet as you wander off seeking the biggest bang for your buck, a slight sense of questioning grazes your mind, but you disregard it with the next bargain you find.

Chances are, you praise Wal-Mart for the amazing prices; your bargain-hunting success overshadows your bewilderment and you move on to the electronics section to find the most tempting prices of the season.

Yet, the question remains: How does Wal-Mart manage to stay on top when it offers consumers such ridiculously convenient prices all the time? The unfortunate reality is that the Wal-Mart Corporation practices some fraudulent, unethical and inhumane behaviors for the mere sake of profiting as much as it does. Unfortunately, the world's largest retailer is not so wholesome.

Bigger than ExxonMobil, General Motors and General Electric, Wal-Mart is also the world's largest company and generated \$378 billion in the past year, according

to *Forbes*. The best part about all this: It is also the largest discriminatory practice of our time.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is undergoing allegations of gender discrimination, sweatshop and exploitation charges.

In 2004, the Supreme Court was introduced to the largest workplace-bias lawsuit in history, *Dukes vs. Wal-Mart*, according to Equal Rights Advocates.

Betty Dukes, a 54-year-old greeter at a Wal-Mart store in California, sued Wal-Mart under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, alleging gender discrimination. On June 21, 2004, a federal judge ruled that her lawsuit could go to trial as a class action with the massive support of up to 1.6 million female employees (both past and present) of Wal-Mart in the United States. Dukes claimed she and all of the women lost promotions, bonuses, pay and ultimately their jobs because they complained.

Male pharmacists, on the other hand, who formerly or currently worked at Wal-Mart, had faced different treatment in terms of pay and promotions. The suit threatens Wal-Mart with as much as \$510 billion in punitive damage. The cases of discriminatory practices are rising from stores all across the country as more women – wives, mothers and grandmothers – speak out against the retail giant.

The lawsuit has already brought important changes to Wal-Mart's workers; women were recently hired into senior staff posi-

tions, a new job posting system for manager-in-training positions has been implemented and wide-scale pay structure adjustments have been made.

In addition to gender discrimination lawsuits, Wal-Mart faces a number of other similar lawsuits that charge the retailer with breaking labor laws. The enterprise has undergone attacks of exploitation and allegations of running a U.S.-based sweatshop.

One particular case of exploitation involves 187,000 current and former employees who worked at Wal-Mart and Sam's Club from March 1998 through May 2006. Workers united to form protests against Wal-Mart for not allowing them rest or meal breaks during their shifts. A jury last year awarded them approximately \$78.5 million.

Of course, Wal-Mart disagreed with the final decision of the case. But really, what is \$78.5 million to the world's largest company? It certainly isn't an arm and a leg of a loss. It barely even scrapes the surface.

With its absolute power in the world marketplace, Wal-Mart pressures its suppliers to drop their prices year after year. This is a huge threat to the free marketplace in America, and in some cases, devastating (as is the case with Kraft since 2004, when Kraft found itself with no other choice than to drop its prices for Wal-Mart, and hence to tear itself to pieces).

Many other situations like this exist where the retailer forces its suppliers out of business, buying them out and ultimately

destroying them. Those who do survive in the face of its pricing demands lose foundation and lay off employees. This creates a rippling effect of unemployment rates.

I'm sure that for many, this case may appear as though it does not affect those who are not involved. In reality, it affects everyone just as much as it affects the over 1.5 million women workers placing the lawsuit.

It affects the general portrayal of women in America today. The battles against the corporate giant is coming from the average American working woman, and has projected a voice of power and independence.

For that, I am glad – although I know it will be a long time before salary gaps, gender discrimination and unethical business practices disappear in our society.

Despite all the cases and money awarded to victims, the Wal-Mart Corporation still comes out on top. I hear the word "change" and "equal" quite often nowadays, but I don't see the actions coinciding with those terms.

Gender discrimination is still discrimination; you are not standing up for equality if you are allowing sexism and chauvinistic ideals to exist in this day and age.

I was once a devoted follower of the "always low prices" tags – until I realized I was supporting discrimination in America, brought to you by your local Wal-Mart.

So, if you hunt around for the biggest bargains at Wal-Mart, then you're fueling the profits of capitalist, destructive retailers that mistreat struggling working-class women in America (and in the rest of the world). Wal-Mart isn't the sole reason why our economy is in shambles but it serves as a huge example of how giant, power-hungry companies are doing us wrong.



But really – what is \$78.5 million to the world's largest company? It certainly isn't an arm and a leg of a loss. It barely scrapes the surface.

Obama's closure of Guantanamo Bay shows morality

MATTHEW RUCKMAN
Staff Writer

On Jan. 24, President Obama signed an executive order to close Guantanamo Bay, suspending all ongoing military tribunals and making plans to shut down the detention center and other CIA "black prisons."

This couldn't come too soon. Since 2001, Guantanamo Bay has been used as a place to house suspected terrorists believed to be withholding information critical to the War on Terror. It has been the elephant in the room concerning American foreign and domestic policy, especially in regard to the Bush administration's aims of spreading "freedom and justice" abroad.

A hypocritical objective given that most inmates of Guantanamo never received a fair trial, the Associated Press reported that over 500 were recently released when the

U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the government's right to hold prisoners beyond the reach of U.S. courts.

Guantanamo also served as a citadel for torture and represented a big fat pimple on the face of America; a place to brutalize individuals, too distant from U.S. shores for anyone to hear the scream.

The Justice Department defined legal interrogation as anything that is not the "... equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death."

It is a truth universally acknowledged: When you want someone tortured properly, you send them to Cuba. The detention facility became synonymous with the "human rights with your fingers crossed" policy that the Bush administration espoused, which placed our country alongside other practitioners of torture like Pol Pot and, ironically enough, Saddam Hussein.

The Washington Post reported that one U.S. official even said, "If you don't violate someone's human rights some of the time, you probably aren't doing your job." This is why the closure of Guantanamo

and other CIA prisons comes as such a welcome event.

We can finally say that we believe in fairness and justice, without lying or laughably redefining torture.

It's a feeling akin to what the Nazi opposition must have felt when the concentration camps were liberated; a collective sigh of relief with the ultimate knowledge that our taxes are not supporting the torture of some guy stuck in a hole and penned up like veal.

It's a great feeling, but presents a daunting question: Are we safe without the information extracted through torture?

There are benefits in using torture but there is also peace in a grounded moral foundation. We have to prepare to accept a certain level of danger to remain a democracy, with all the liberties that entails.

What it comes down to is choice. To be a nation of laws, a person of

ideals, or to be that other entity that cares about its own preservation at the cost of everything else – like human decency.

I'm glad Obama made his decision and recognized that the choice between safety and ethics isn't a choice at all. In shutting down Guantanamo, Obama returned America to its proper place: a place where values are not shirked in the face of disaster, but instead held and gripped, so that we may rise above the tide of terrorism.

To be a nation of laws, a person of

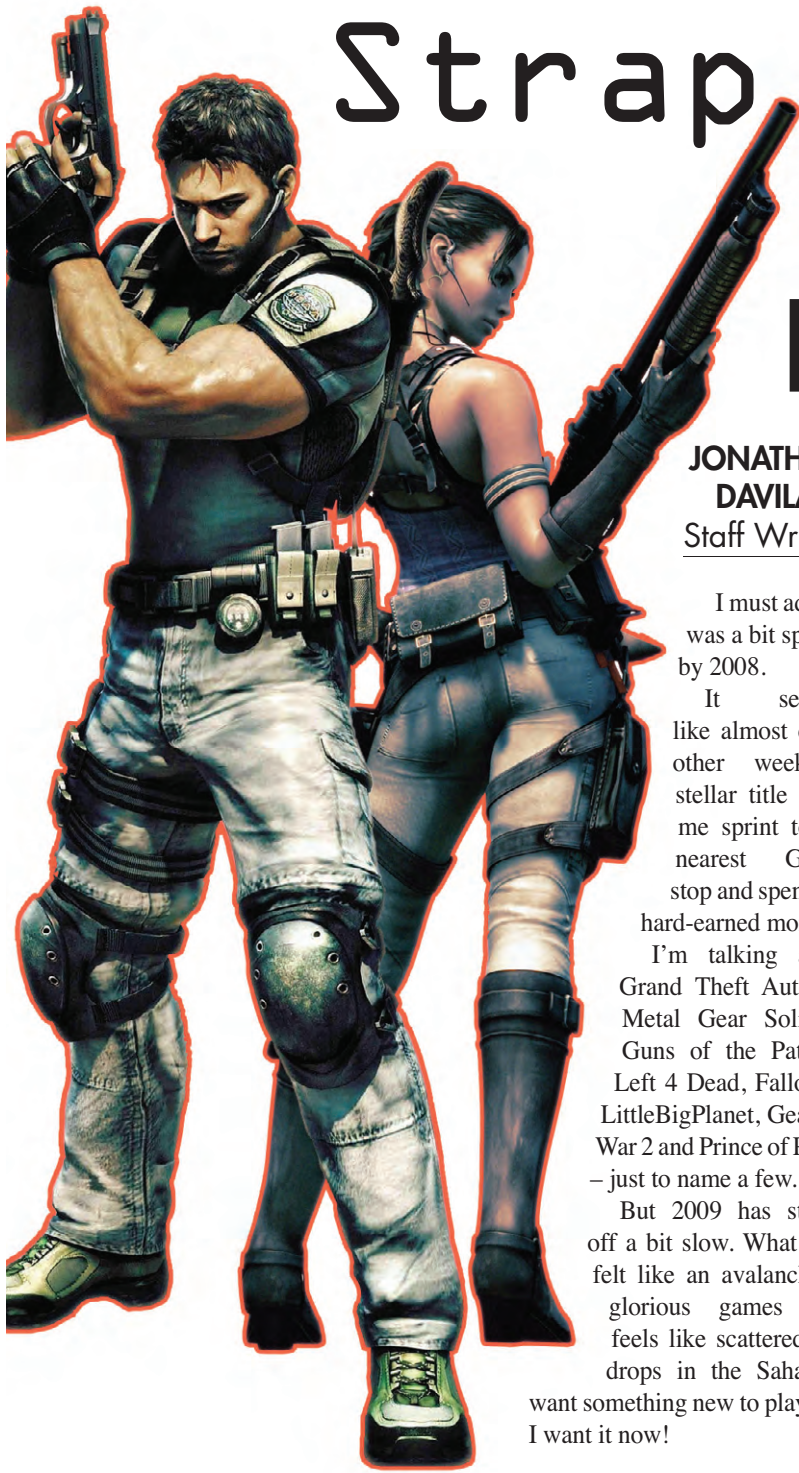
To be a nation of laws, a person of

To be a nation of laws, a person of

To be a nation of laws, a person of

We have to accept a certain level of danger so that we may remain a democracy, with all the liberties that entails.





Strap on your guns 2009 video games deliver brawls, shoot 'em ups aplenty

**JONATHAN
DAVILA**
Staff Writer

I must admit I was a bit spoiled by 2008.

It seemed like almost every other week, a stellar title made me sprint to the nearest Game-stop and spend my hard-earned money.

I'm talking about Grand Theft Auto IV, Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots, Left 4 Dead, Fallout 3, LittleBigPlanet, Gears of War 2 and Prince of Persia - just to name a few.

But 2009 has started off a bit slow. What once felt like an avalanche of glorious games now feels like scattered rain drops in the Sahara. I want something new to play, and I want it now!

So what do we gamers have to look forward to in the early portion of 2009?

Let's take a look.

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN (X360, PS3, PC)

The well-received supernatural first-person shooter F.E.A.R. has had two expansion packs since its original release on the PC in 2005.

Finally, players will continue the story of Alma, the creepy psychic girl who wants to destroy the world after some company impregnated her to try and produce genetically-engineered, psychic soldiers.

You won't be in Point Man's shoes this time around, though - F.E.A.R. 2 puts you between the ears of Michael Becket, a Delta Force operator.

Expect more Japanese-inspired horror and bullets aplenty when Warner Bros. ships F.E.A.R. 2 on Feb. 10.

STREET FIGHTER IV (X360, PS3)

It's been 10 years since the

release of a true Street Fighter sequel, and Capcom is bringing it back in style. The 2D fighter embraces cel-shaded visuals and gameplay more reminiscent of Street Fighter II Turbo than more recent iterations.

The coin-operated arcade game has already been released in Japan, and some arcades in the U.S. have imported it, so you may be able to get a sneak peek of the fighter at local arcades.

Console versions of the game will be in stores on Feb. 17, so start practicing your hadokens and sonic booms.

KILLZONE 2 (PS3)

This sci-fi first-person shooter was originally slated for release in late 2008, but was delayed for unknown reasons (cough, Resistance 2).

Guerilla Games probably needed the extra time to polish the frenetic, guns blazing gameplay that will feature worldwide, online multiplayer for the first time.

Up to 32 players can connect into one match, and the game

will feature a class system similar to Call of Duty.

The single-player campaign will continue the story of the Interplanetary Space Alliance as they invade the home world of the Helghast, the planet Helghan.

Killzone 2 drops on Feb. 27.

RESIDENT EVIL 5 (X360, PS3)

Imagine the great gameplay from Resident Evil 4 with HD visuals, agile enemies and new lighting effects. Now imagine all of that with online, cooperative gameplay and you'll get Resident Evil 5.

Players will assume the role of Chris Redfield, one of the protagonists from the original title. Redfield is joined by newcomer Sheva Alomar, the second playable character, as they venture into Africa to uncover the origin of one of the series' many viruses.

The critically-acclaimed survival-horror series makes its return, creeping onto store shelves on March 13.

HURRY UP AND WAIT



JAVIER DE LA VEGA/THE BEACON

ORDINARY PEOPLE: About seven hundred students lined up to purchase tickets for the John Legend event.

Yoga club makes you go 'Om'

SHANNON FALLON
Staff Writer

Are you looking to de-stress this semester? Just to get away from all the distractions and drown out the noise of school? Then look no further!

The University Park Yoga Club offers opportunities to feed your mind and body with stress-relieving yoga and activities.

But the Yoga Club isn't your typical club with deadlines and inconvenient meeting times, it's a club specifically made for its members to unwind from the tensing pressures of school and calm any anxiety that has been building up throughout the semester.

"We don't have general meetings. General meetings tend to be ineffective in getting people to show up and it's too stressful for students," said Leonor Armas, president of the Yoga Club.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word that means union. It is not limited to physical exercise alone - that is merely one aspect of it.

The physical exercises and breathing techniques were originally designed to keep the body strong and healthy so that the practitioner could more easily reach for some of the deeper aspects of yoga, according to the American Yoga Association.

The union between breathing and the body during exercise can also inspire a union between one's self and environment, creating awareness that impacts everyday behavior.

The AYA also states that yoga promotes a healthier lifestyle by ridding the body of toxins and encouraging the consumption of organic produce, avoiding the chemicals found in everyday foods. It not only benefits the body, but the environment.

"Yoga is a way to bring you to the present moment and be centered. It is about awareness and noticing your impact on yourself as well as others. Once you are able to approach situations with a clear mind and just be 100 percent focused in everything that you do, you get so much more out of life. Not only because

you are always giving each little act your all, but because you end up with all of this extra time," Armas said.

The benefits of doing yoga are many, according to Armas. Such benefits include weight control, better posture, improved balance, better sleep and more energy.

For these reasons, some students have already joined the club.

"I want to synchronize my body and mind. I would like to promote the yoga lifestyle in all imaginable aspects of my life: personal, academic and professional. I'm looking to find balance in my own life with the help of the club," said Dorian Santos, a sophomore psychology major and new club member.

The Yoga Club also works with the Art of Living organization which maintain programs such as YES +.

YES + is a program that helps "empower young people with tools to eliminate stress, rid the system of negative emotions, develop strong social and leadership skills, heighten awareness and increase mental focus."

Don't stress if you don't have much experience in the

YOGA, page 6



A look at the best remakes throughout the years

It seems to me that Hollywood is running out of ideas. In order to make money, they rehash old movie classics and modernize them for moviegoers. The majority of the remakes fall in the horror genre, which includes Japanese horror (J-horror) films. While there have been pretty bad remakes in the past (Psycho, The Wicker Man), there have also been tremendously successful ones. Here is a list of the best remakes of all-time:

6) Little Shop of Horrors: Little Shop of Horrors was originally a black-and-white B-movie directed by Roger Corman and starring a young Jack Nicholson. Several years later, the movie was turned into an off-Broadway musical comedy and then returned to the big screen as musical. A nerdy orphan (Rick Moranis) works at a florist shop where he discovers a mysterious plant that feeds on human blood only and the bigger the appetite, the bigger the plant

gets. One of the highlights of the film is Steve Martin's role as a sadistic dentist who enjoys torturing his patients, except for one patient (Bill Murray) whose pleasure is pain.

5) Invasion of the Body Snatchers: This remake of the 1956 film, which in turn was based on a novel, is about a Department of Public Health worker (Brooke Adams) and her colleague (Donald Sutherland) who discovers that their town is slowly being invaded by pod-like aliens.

THE CINEMATIC



STEVE MESA

Don Siegel and Kevin McCarthy, the director and star of the original film, have cameos in the film. Siegel plays a taxi driver who may or may not be a pod and McCarthy plays the same character he played in the original film, only to get run over by a car.

4) The Fly: The original 1958 film featured horror legend Vincent Price as a man investigating in a case where a scientist has a horrific accident using a tele-

portation device with a fly in it that causes to exchange the head and hand of a fly with his. Directed by David Cronenberg (Eastern Promises) and produced by Mel Brooks, the 1986 remake takes it a step further with Jeff Goldblum as brilliant and eccentric scientist who slowly transforms into a giant man/fly hybrid after using his latest invention, two matter teleportation pods, where a fly flew into one of the pods. The film won an Oscar for its makeup, which took five hours to apply the most extensive makeup stages to Goldblum.

3) The Thing: Though this film takes certain elements from the 1951 film The Thing from Another World, it is different and gorier than the original film. Directed by John Carpenter, an American scientific expedition that is led by Kurt Russell is stationed in Antarctica. They are interrupted by a group of Norwegians chasing a dog in a helicopter. What they did not know is that the dog mutates into a horrible creature - an alien that has the ability to transform



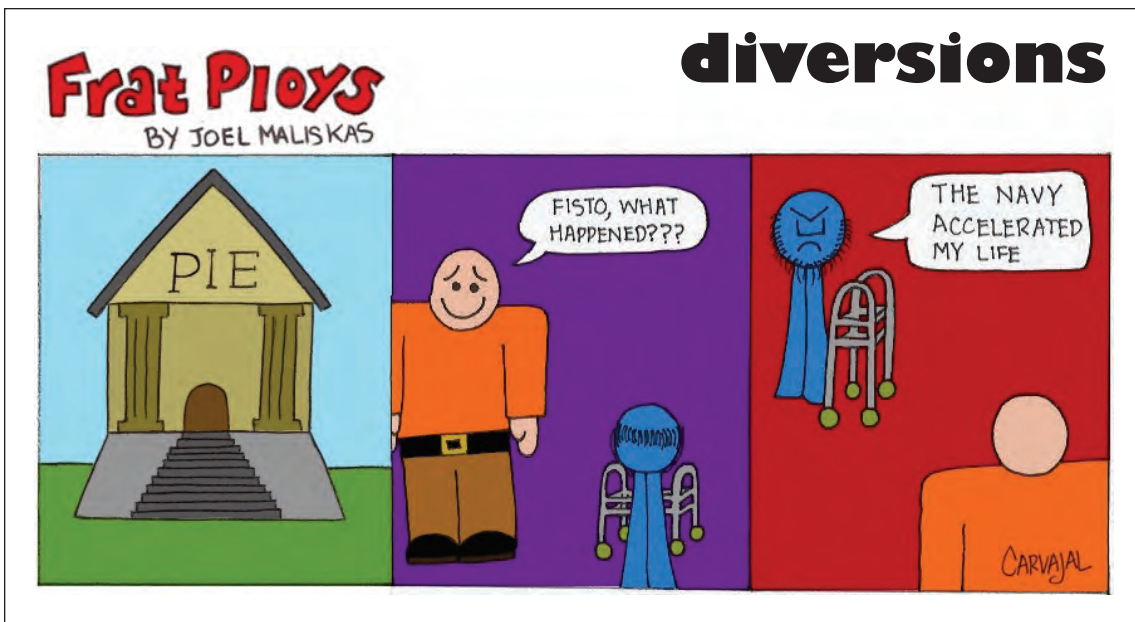
and take the appearance of anyone amongst them.

2) Scarface: Originally a 1932 gangster film starring Paul Muni, Scarface started the trend of Tony Montana imitations and inspired the hip-hop/rap community. The story is set in 1983 where a Cuban refugee by the name of Tony Montana (Al Pacino) and his friend, Manny (Steven Bauer) build a drug empire in Miami, Florida. When it was released in 1983, the film was blasted by critics and bombed at the box office. Over time, Scarface

has had cult following and eventually was ranked number ten on the American Film Institute's list of the ten greatest films in the genre "Gangster".

1) The Departed: Based on the 2002 Hong Kong film called Infernal Affairs, this Oscar-winning film features an amazing ensemble, great plot twists and lots of blood. Two recent graduated officers from the Massachusetts State Police Academy are working on opposite of the law. Billy Costigan (Leonardo DiCaprio) is assigned to work undercover with the Irish mobster Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson) to get evidence to arrest him. The Departed has become Martin Scorsese's biggest hit grossing up to \$132 million domestically and winner of four Oscars, including Best Picture and Director.

There has been rumors that there will be a sequel to the movie that will feature Robert De Niro as a crooked senator and the return of Sean Dignam.



Yoga helps mind, body

YOGA, page 5

practice of yoga. No experience is needed and the cost is free. Just bring a clear and open mind and let yoga do the rest.

The club meets Wednesdays at the farmer's market from 1-3 p.m., where club members get to work together with the Garden Club making organic smoothies with fresh organic produce.

And if you want to unwind after a long week of lectures and reading, join the Yoga Club Fridays at 2 p.m. in the GC Ballroom area for guided yoga sessions and meditations.

The Yoga Club participates in different types of yoga that focus on specific areas such as bhakti yoga (devotional), jnana yoga (intellectual), hatha yoga (physical) raja yoga (meditative).

Updike passes away

HILLEL ITALIE
AP Wire

John Updike, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, prolific man of letters and erudite chronicler of sex, divorce and other adventures in the postwar prime of the American empire, died Tuesday at age 76.

Updike, best known for his four "Rabbit" novels, died of lung cancer at a hospice near his home in Beverly Farms, Mass., according to his longtime publisher, Alfred A. Knopf.

A literary writer who frequently appeared on best-seller lists, the tall, hawk-nosed Updike wrote novels, short stories, poems, criticism, the memoir "Self-Consciousness" and even a famous essay about baseball great Ted Williams.

He released more than 50 books in a career that started in the 1950s, winning virtually every literary prize, including two Pulitzers, for "Rabbit Is Rich" and "Rabbit at Rest," and two National Book Awards.

Although himself deprived of a Nobel, he did bestow it upon one of his fictional characters, Henry Bech, the womanizing, egotistical Jewish novelist who collected the literature prize in 1999.

His settings ranged from the court of "Hamlet" to postcolonial Africa, but his literary home was the American

suburb, the great new territory of mid-century fiction.

Born in 1932, Updike spoke for millions of Depression-era readers raised by "penny-pinching parents," united by "the patriotic cohesion of World War II" and blessed by a "disproportionate share of the world's resources," the postwar, suburban boom of "idealistic careers and early marriages."

He captured, and sometimes embodied, a generation's confusion over the civil rights and women's movements, and opposition to the Vietnam War. Updike was called a misogynist, a racist and an apologist for the establishment.

His standing within the literary community may never have been greater than in 2006 when he delivered a passionate defense of bookstores and words, words on paper, at publishing's annual national convention. Responding to a recent New York Times essay predicting a digital future, he scorned this "pretty grisly scenario" and praised the paper book as the site of an "encounter, in silence, of two minds."

"So, booksellers, defend your lonely forts," he concluded.

His speech was applauded, discussed and widely quoted, far more than the talk given at the same breakfast gathering by then Sen. Obama.

THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

FRIDAY • JANUARY 30

WHAT: Eagle Eye
WHEN: 6pm
WHERE: GC 140
CONTACT: 305-348-3823

WHAT: Asian Movie Club meeting and films
WHEN: 7pm
WHERE: GC 314
CONTACT: 305-348-1069

WHAT: John Legend
WHEN: 8pm
WHERE: The Fillmore Miami Beach
CONTACT: 305-673-7300

WHAT: Joe Coffee
WHEN: 10pm
WHERE: Churchill's
CONTACT: 305-757-1807

WHAT: South Florida Indy Film Festival
WHEN: call
WHERE: Colony Theatre
CONTACT: 305-674-1026

SATURDAY • JANUARY 31

WHAT: Crimzen Kingpinz
WHEN: 9pm
WHERE: Boardwalk Tavern & Pizzeria
CONTACT: 305-567-0080

WHAT: Monster Jam
WHEN: 7:30pm
WHERE: Dolphin Stadium
CONTACT: 305-623-6100

WHAT: Just the Funny Improv Comedy Theatre Company
WHEN: 9pm
WHERE: Miami Museum of Science & Planetarium
CONTACT: 305-MY-FUNNY

WHAT: The Wedding Singer musical
WHEN: 7:30pm
WHERE: Miniaci Performing Arts Center
CONTACT: 954-462-0222

WHAT: Monthly Vegan Potluck
WHEN: 7:30pm
WHERE: Coral Gables Congregational Church
CONTACT: 305-448-7421

SUNDAY • FEBRUARY 1

WHAT: Carlos Reygada's Silent Light
WHEN: 8pm
WHERE: Miami Beach Cinematheque
CONTACT: 305-673-4567

WHAT: Super Bowl Party
WHEN: 6pm
WHERE: Mike's at Venetia
CONTACT: 305-374-5731

WHAT: SoBay Festival of the Arts
WHEN: 6pm
WHERE: Deering Estate
CONTACT: 305-235-1668

WHAT: Miami Orchid Festival
WHEN: 10 am
WHERE: Dade County Fair Expo
CONTACT: 305-247-4398

WHAT: Miami Jewish Film Fest
WHEN: 11 am
WHERE: Sunrise Cinema
CONTACT: 305-573-7304

Compiled by Mariana Ochoa

CROSS TOWN LOSS



GIOVANNI GAUDARRAMA/THE BEACON

GABLES DEFEAT: FIU tennis lost its first game of the season 6-1 vs. the University of Miami Hurricanes on Jan. 28. No. 13 Miami is 3-0 with this record while the Golden Panthers fall to 1-1. They are nationally ranked No. 53.

Damas hopes to bring expertise, motivation

DAMAS, page 7

TB: From a recruiting standpoint, what do you think you can do to complement the coaching staff?

FD: I think mainly the relationship that I have with the baseball community in Miami, Broward County, Palm Beach County, junior colleges in the state of Florida. I have a good rapport with them. I feel like they trust me. That's the main thing, building a relationship with the Florida area.

TB: How have you gotten to know the team since you were hired?

FD: That's been one of my top priorities – getting to know the players, their makeup and what types of kids they are; trying to get reads on them like they're trying to get reads on me.

TB: How can you help the baseball program?

FD: This program before coach Thomas took over was in need of a makeover, a complete makeover. I think that I can help in the recruiting aspect. I can help on the field with the players defensively in the outfield. I can supplement coach Turtle Thomas when it comes to the offense, but I think the main aspect is in the recruiting.

TB: How do you plan to adjust from coaching in Miami-Dade to playing in Division I?

FD: Junior college baseball has 52 games so

it's not a big difference as far as the length of the season. There's not going to be much adjusting except for the travel. In junior college you don't travel much. Traveling is mostly on bus, close proximity because of budget restriction.

TB: How can your experience in championship games rub off on some of the FIU players?

FD: In those situations, all you can do is attempt to practice that. You can try to put pressure during practice to see how they perform, but there is really no teaching to that.

TB: Being 27, what are some of the advantages to coaching players close in age?

FD: I think I have the pleasure of relating to them a little better than an older coach would. I think that I would be the first line of defense if they have a problem or a question. They would feel more comfortable coming to me first rather than going straight to the head coach. Sean Allen's been here longer than I have, and he's built that relationship with those guys from what I've seen.

TB: What was one of the biggest factors that made you choose FIU?

FD: I had other Division I offers to work outside of Florida. The thing that intrigued me the most besides working with Turtle Thomas and this great coaching staff: No. 1, I felt I can help this program grow and No. 2, it's in my backyard here in Miami. My family could go watch.

Van Gundy's unconventional style inspires Magic

BY TIM REYNOLDS
AP Sports Writer

Stan Van Gundy just bought a new car.

A gift from the Orlando Magic coach to himself, a reward for his team's sizzling start to the season? Not really. Van Gundy simply needed one because of engine problems in the old one.

Of course, that's what happens when someone engulfed by work forgets to change his oil for 30,000 miles.

"It's not to say that it's a joyless existence," Van Gundy said. "But you don't have time to focus on the record and 'Oh, well, we're doing well' and all that. The next game up is all you're really focused on."

It's a simple approach, one Van Gundy has always had, whether it was at Castleton State in Vermont, or as Pat Riley's replacement with the Miami Heat or even now with the Magic, who matched their best

first-half start in franchise history. Orlando (34-10) plays host to the Cleveland Cavaliers (35-8) on Thursday — a game between two of the league's elite clubs.

The approach works, too.

His car problems notwithstanding, Van Gundy has the Magic running on all cylinders.

"I give all the credit to Stan Van Gundy," forward Rashard Lewis said. "He's always giving us some type of challenge, if it's in practice or in a meeting or right before a game."

Thursday might be another good test to see how close Orlando is to becoming that team.

The Magic have an All-Star center in Dwight Howard, just got Mickael Pietrus back from a broken wrist, and just had a 135-point explosion in beating Indiana.

Still, there's no shortage of NBA believers in Magic.

"They are the best team in the East ... hands down," Indiana's

Danny Granger said.

If that's the case, it speaks volumes about Van Gundy, for whom coaching is practically an all-consuming quest.

The quintessential Van Gundy moment so far this season might have come on Christmas Day. There was a montage on the TV broadcast in the third quarter of Van Gundy contorting his face, holding his head in his hands and doubling over in anguish.

They were beating the New Orleans Hornets by 31 points.

"It's probably one of the best qualities Stan has. He wears his emotions out on his sleeve," said Heat coach Erik Spoelstra, a close friend of Van Gundy and now a Southeast Division rival. "He's always 100 percent real. He's not coming from any other angle, other than what he's actually feeling."

Van Gundy can be brutally honest, too. From players taking bad shots to criticizing the Bowl

Championship Series' method of crowning a college football champion and just about anything else, he isn't shy about offering his opinion.

"In the beginning, I don't think anybody understood how intense he was and how passionate he was about playing the right way, doing everything right, everything being perfect," point guard Jameer Nelson said. "But he's a great coach. We understand him now. We never hold grudges. He's allowed to say something to you, you can say something back, and then we go play."

Sometimes, it's all Nelson can do to not laugh.

He told a story of a game earlier this month, when an errant pass sailed toward the Magic bench and Van Gundy stuck his hand in the air to snare it, all without missing stride in whatever he was ranting about at the time.

Orlando won the Southeast Division last year in Van Gundy's debut with the Magic, and entering Wednesday, had an eight-game lead in this year's divisional chase.

The Magic are 1½ games behind

Cleveland and only one game in the loss column behind reigning NBA champion Boston in the Eastern Conference standings, and the winning coach Thursday — Van Gundy or the Cavs' Mike Brown — could wind up as the East coach in next month's All-Star game.

For Van Gundy, a trip to Phoenix would very much be a double-edged sword.

"You want to play well and have the great record," Van Gundy said. "But to be honest, what it would mean to me is I don't get those four days off. I look forward to that time as a time at home where I can be with my family more. But I would love to see us on top of the East. Coaching the thing, that's not a goal of mine at all."

No, his lone goal is clear. In every Magic player's locker, a picture of the NBA championship trophy is taped to a wall.

With Van Gundy at the controls, Orlando has emerged as a contender — a huge turnaround considering the Magic spent much of the previous decade as little more than also-rans in the East.

"It's a long season, but obviously, success helps you get through it," Van Gundy said. "And it has been enjoyable."



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CLASSIFIEDS

MISCELLANEOUS

HONOR STUDENTS: Phi Sigma Theta National Honor Society is seeking motivated students to establish a campus chapter. Contact: Director@PhiSigmaTheta.org

WE ARE THE



FIU may drop the 'Golden' from team name without asking student body, leaving unoriginal mascot in place

Having attended a number of FIU sporting events this school year, I've noticed a particularly conspicuous absence of an element of athletics that has been seemingly ubiquitous since 1987.

It's not the apathy, which seems to be fading in favor of more fervor, and that's a good thing. It's the Golden missing before Panthers.

It's part of a campaign by the Athletics Department to drop the Golden altogether, with FIU Panthers eventually becoming the name of the athletic teams.

I'm not an expert on the processes by which universities choose their mascots, but the greatest population of individuals represented by the mascot is the student body and I don't remember being informed of any upcoming change before the preliminary decisions were made.

I do, however, have a fair amount of knowledge on the mascots, names and colors of a great number of Division I athletic programs, and I've come to find that although there are mascots that are shared, even by teams very close to one another,

there isn't much else shared when the mascots are the same, Auburn and LSU for example.

When I think of colleges and universities carving out a public image, based around the imaging and logos that become associated with the idea of a particular school, I imagine artwork and colors that have been forged in the collegiate landscape over the time that tradition has had time to accrue, or conceptions and reflections of universities that have, with their individuality, fashioned lasting memories in the local and national consciousness.

This appears to be another limitation of the creation of unique traditions here at FIU, at least in this writer's opinion.

I happen to be quite interested in the aesthetics of college athletics, and with winning comes name recognition and that brings the possibilities of branding, not just as a vessel for selling sweatshirts and baseball caps, but for expanding the brand to the national community, which, in turn, can pay tremendous dividends for the institution.

Along with naming and coloring, this image becomes a unique feature for a university community.

I believe the navy and gold-panthers market is covered by the Fighting Wannstaches up in Allegheny County. When I think panthers, I think Pittsburgh, and I go here. They have over a century of tradition in place, and are recognized as such.

The logo sacrificed uniqueness in both its font and approach last summer for what felt, and still feels, like manufactured sameness, contrived for the purposes of falling squarely in line with the time honored generics of the college logo landscape.

It could be argued that a logo needs to be recognizable to be marketable, but it helps as well to be unique. Walk around a shopping mall in Boca Raton, and you can find FAU Owl apparel with a very unique logo.

I don't think it's a matter of being like everyone else; we'll never be like anyone else - we're a commuter school in Miami.

It's a matter of trying to be ourselves and not someone else.



Scaling back is sometimes good, but in this case, less isn't more.

New asst. coach welcomes challenges

SERGIO BONILLA
Asst. Sports Director

Last season, the Golden Panthers baseball program finished 20-36 in the first season under head coach Turtle Thomas. The man in charge of the baseball program made his final hire before starting the 2008-09 season, adding Frank Damas to his coaching staff on Jan. 5, an assistant coach and recruiting coordinator at Miami-Dade College from 2003-2008.

During that span, MDC won four Southern Conference championships and recorded a 202-70 record. Now, with the baseball season starting on Feb. 20, Damas shares his thoughts on joining the coaching staff in an interview with *The Beacon*.

The Beacon: How did you know coach Turtle Thomas before joining the coaching staff?

Frank Damas: Who doesn't know Turtle Thomas? I used to work at Miami-Dade College last year. I had a relationship with him through Miami-Dade Junior College as a feeder program trying to send him players.



DAMAS

DAMAS, page 7

MEN'S BASKETBALL NOTEBOOK

Golden Panthers head into critical stretch of the season

JONATHAN RAMOS
Asst. Sports Director

With eight games left in the season, the Golden Panthers (8-14, 3-6 Sun Belt) are now down to the most important stretch for a team with conference championship aspirations.

In losing the last two conference games to University of Louisiana-Monroe and the University of North Texas, FIU will have to win at least six of its final eight games in order to finish above .500 in SBC competition.

Beginning with a Jan. 31 home contest vs. the University of Arkansas-Little Rock and ending with a home game against FAU, whom the Golden Panthers already defeated on the road.

Arguably the biggest factor affecting the Golden Panthers' success late in the season is their health and frontcourt.

A BIG ADDITION

Center Russell Hicks played in his first game since late November to score 11 points on 4-of-10 shooting at ULM.

The All-SBC second teamer has missed a chunk of the season due to a stress fracture, but his presence gives the Golden Panthers an intimidating pair of post-players in him and Freddy Asprilla.

During practices, Asprilla says he has been advising Hicks to be more aggressive.

"I've been telling [him] to be stronger on the inside to get more rebounding," Asprilla said.

Hicks also grabbed five rebounds against ULM.

INCONSISTENT

Forward Nikola Gacesa has been one of few FIU players to stay healthy throughout the season, but his consistent minutes have come with unreliable results of late.

In Gacesa's last six games, the junior had 17, 12 and 20 points in three contests, but he averaged less than five points in the other three.

The Belegrade native has maintained a career-high average of 10.4 points and 4.6 rebounds on the season, however.

LEADING AGAIN

Even though guard Michael Domniguez led the team in scoring while forward Alex Galindo was gone, the Puerto Rican native has regained his crown as the team's perimeter offensive leader. He is averaging 16 points since his eight games back. Also from Puerto Rico is Josue Soto, trying to establish himself during the last few games.

"Nick Taylor has done a great job, but Josue gives us more of a scoring point guard," said assistant coach Kevin Fricke.



VICTORIA LYNCH/THE BEACON

FINALLY STARTING: Guard Josue Soto started his first game of the season against the University of Louisiana Monroe on Jan. 24. He is expected to see more playing time the rest of the season.