

FIU declared a green, 'Tree Campus'

PAGE 3



Panel Panel reviews the Red Robin series

PAGE 6



SPOTLIGHT

AT THE BAY PAGE 3



Foodgasm: With South Florida temperatures dropping to record lows, our columnist Bianca Rojas shares her top three picks that serve the best of the ultimate winter comfort food.

OPINION PAGE 4

Cabralitics: Columnist Chris Cabral looks at more "unconventional" methods of airline security as the U.S. continues to measure its options.

OPINION PAGE 4



NBC proves once again that it's the worst run major network on television as talks are underway to bring back Jay Leno to his original time slot.

LIFE! PAGE 5

Lip dub - a video is being made in GC that will take students lip-syncing and dub a song over it.

SPORTS PAGE 8



Men's basketball Antoine Watson is suspended for a violation of rules.

SPORTS PAGE 8

Recruiting Roundup checks on Golden Panthers' commitments.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Black Student Union Meeting, Jan. 13, 8 p.m. General meeting will be held for free in GC 150.

Florida Panthers vs. Washington Capitals, Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m. For \$10-25, you can cheer for your local hockey team live at the Bank Atlantic Center.

A Rose Tattoo - film, Jan. 14, 8:30 p.m. For \$10 you can watch this film being screened at Cinematheque in Miami Beach.

- More events can be found in our Monday and Friday issues of Life!

WEATHER



WEDNESDAY
Partly Cloudy
LOW: 55 HIGH: 66



THURSDAY
Mostly Cloudy
LOW: 61 HIGH: 69



FRIDAY
Partly Cloudy
LOW: 67 HIGH: 74

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SUCH GREAT HEIGHTS



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LESTER ESCOTO/THE BEACON

Sophomore Namiko Chiabata, psychology major, practices her high dive at the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Center on Jan. 8. This composite image shows various stages of her technique. **For the recap of the women's swimming and diving team, turn to Page 8.**

BRIGHT FUTURES

Scholarship changes met with mixed reactions

ELSIE PUIG
Staff Writer

Last semester students at the University were informed of changes in their Bright Futures scholarship: the award is now worth less than before and carries a harsher penalty for dropped courses.

The changes to Bright Futures, which became effective Fall 2009, implemented a fixed cost per credit hour and requires students to pay back any classes that were dropped after the drop/add period, according to the Florida Student Financial Aid Web site.

During Summer 2009 the University took action to warn students about the changes.

Francisco Valines, financial aid director, said FIU sent out letters, put up posters outlining the changes and installed pop-up messages in PantherSoft warning students of financial consequences of dropping/adding courses.

"In the long run it has a positive effect, everyone will graduate sooner," Valines said, "The money you would have spent on classes, books, gas money, food and other costs, you would be earning it as soon as you start working."

According to the Financial Aid Office in Fall 2008, approximately 18 percent of registered students ended up dropping a class. For Fall 2009 the number decreased, an estimated 12 percent of students registered dropped a class.

As of the last week of December 2009, 80 percent of students have been able to repay the classes they dropped.

The changes came as a consequence of the 2009 Florida Legislative budget-trimming

BRIGHT FUTURES, page 2

Students take steps to resolve global issues

BLANCA MORALES
Staff Writer

The Clinton Global Initiative University has accepted several University students to attend their annual meeting where they will discuss issues like poverty and education among others.

According to Hannah Clark, the CGI's communication manager, the yearly conference helps students develop innovative, world-changing projects. The program helps students realize that they have the power to make a significant impact on the world's future.

The Clinton Global Initiative began in 2005 and the CGI U, which is the college division, began in 2007. This year's event will take place April 2010 at the University of Miami.

The Web site elaborates on the program's chief purpose, to form and awaken students into taking action and seek solutions in the areas of education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation and public health.

Students, business leaders, government officials as well as non-governmental organizations, are

among the anticipated attendees and will discuss solutions to some of the world's most critical challenges.

"When an opportunity such as the Clinton Global Initiative University came along, I could not think of a more perfect means to accomplish a step in the right direction," said senior Stephanie Lewis, an environmental studies major.

Lewis found out about CGI U from an e-mail sent to her by the University. After looking into it, she felt this program was the best way she could make a difference for the environment.

Last year's program participants

included President Bill Clinton as the host, Natalie Portman, Matthew McConaughey, Paul Begala and Luke Russert.

Participating students are challenged to take realistic, concrete steps in solving global issues by proposing a Commitment to Action - a specific, formal plan of action that addresses a particular issue on their campus, in their community or abroad.

For her Commitment to Action - a pledge to step out and make a difference that must be submitted

CGI U, page 2

NEWS FLASH

NATIONAL

Avatar breaks box-office records and fans' spirits

James Cameron's completely immersive spectacle *Avatar* may have been a little too real for some fans who say they have experienced depression and suicidal thoughts after seeing the film because they long to enjoy the beauty of the alien world Pandora.

On the fan forum site, "Avatar Forums," a topic thread entitled "Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible," received more than 1,000 posts from people experiencing depression and fans trying to help them cope.

According to CNN, suggestions within the fan forum community for battling feelings of depression after seeing the movie include things like playing *Avatar* video games or downloading the movie soundtrack, as well as encouraging members to relate to other people outside the virtual realm and to seek out positive and constructive activities.

Cameron's movie has pulled in more than \$1.4 billion at the worldwide box office and could be on track to be the highest grossing film of all time.

Former governor apologizes for racist comments

Former Gov. of Illinois Rod Blagojevich apologized Monday morning for controversial comments he made, in which he compared himself to the President.

The comments were made in an interview for *Esquire* magazine's February issue, in which the twice-elected Democrat said: "I'm blacker than Barack Obama."

According to Chicago's WGN9 News, Blagojevich claimed he was speaking metaphorically and that he is obviously not blacker than President Obama.

- Compiled by Gabriel Arraras

SGC-MMC discuss budget ideas

FRANCISCO MARADIAGA
Staff Writer

The Student Government President at Modesto Maidique Campus Anthony Rionda, gave a rare "State of the Student" address at the Jan. 11 senate meeting that asked his fellow members of government what would be their legacy and how it should translate in the new budget.

The address, as designed by Rionda, was more of a question and answer period than a full speech, and served as a precursor to the budget hearings that will be held next month. Much of the address centered around opportunities presented by the as-yet assembled allocations for the coming fiscal year.

"Next year we have a chance with the budget, a chance no one has had before," Rionda said. "Because no one has had the far-reaching view."

The president asked the SGC-MMC senate to look past simple resolutions that ask to fix things and concentrate

on grander ideas that could be developed with proper allocations in the new budget. As an example he used a new computer lab in the engineering building to illustrate the ideas SGA could pursue in the next fiscal year.

"We have \$11.6 million," Rionda said. "And I'll be as cheap as humanly possible to make sure we get the most bang out of our bucks and everyone else has to be too."

One area he would like to fix with this grand push is a perceived problem with involvement and school spirit with FIU students. Rionda invoked a Facebook group, "I hate when students at my university wear stuff from other universities," to illustrate what often happens around the halls. Aside from personally calling out people that wear emblems from other universities at FIU, Rionda asked the senate "What are we going to do about it?"

Rionda feels the ideas he is advocating for would help build a connection with students.

"In this year's budget we are

going to say, 'as soon as you become a student you are going to get benefits,'" he said.

Rionda also spoke about getting more from the Florida legislature, especially as they are considering making health insurance mandatory.

"What do we expect from the government to allow themselves to call ourselves a public university and not a student university because we pay for it all," said the SGC-MMC president.

He did not go into specifics on a game plan with the Florida legislature, but student leaders will head up to the state capital this semester to lobby for the University as part of FIU Day.

Rionda hopes his administration will be remembered as a government that had to deal with many changes but made it work.

"What are we going to leave behind?" Rionda asked. "Are they going to remember anything we've done, or did we just do it to be cool and write it on our resume?"

Initiative accepts student pledges

CGI U, page 1

with the application to join – Lewis proposed to establish dialogue with Florida farmers to plan and implement efficient irrigation procedures to reduce water loss.

Since the CGI U's inaugural meeting, over 2,000 commitments have been made from installing energy-efficient light bulbs to designing medical backpacks for nomadic doctors in Africa.

Junior Patricia Huamanchumo, a biology major, is committed to informing

others about climate change.

"After surviving two terrible car accidents, I think I am here for a reason. What better inspiration than to help rescue my planet," Huamanchumo said.

Senior Viktor El-Saieh, an international affairs major, wants to work with Art Creation Foundation for Children by finding alternative methods to supply food to approximately 60 needy children in Jacmel, Haiti.

"Organizations like CGI and ACFFC are helping Haiti to recover one step at a time and I intend to

help in any way I can," El-Saieh said. He added that he is looking forward to attending CGI U and hopes to travel to his native Haiti to begin working.

This year approximately 1,200 students along with 300 university presidents, professors, government figures, celebrities and activists will gather April 16-18 to discuss global issues and their possible solutions.

"I am most looking forward to what I can learn from attending and from the other participants," said Amida Frey, a joint

degree seeking student, both in the College of Law and in the Environmental Studies Graduate Master's program.

The event is free for all those accepted to the program. Interested students are encouraged to apply at their Web site, www.cgiu.org by Feb 22 in order to participate. Applications must include a Commitment to Action.

"I am excited to see what innovative solutions to the world's most pressing problems students will bring to CGI U in 2010," Clinton said in a press release.

CORRECTIONS

In the issue dated Jan. 8 2010, the front page graphic depicts Marvin Roberts, not Antoine Watson.

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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Rionda: changes only fair

BRIGHT FUTURES, page 1

session that readjusted the merit-based scholarship to make up for the dollars lost due to dropped courses.

As announced on notifications sent to students throughout Florida, the state will no longer fund 75 or 100 percent of a student's tuition, which increased by 15 percent this year.

Recipients of the Florida Academic Scholars award who received 100 percent coverage will be awarded \$126 per credit hour, and recipients of the Florida Medallion and Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award will receive \$95 per credit hour.

"I believe it is a fair compromise," said Anthony Rionda, president of Student Government Council at Modesto Maidique Campus. "Students are held responsible to hold their end of the bargain to the state, who are footing the cost of their education."

Rionda said the University has seen a decrease in the number of students dropping out of classes and the changes encourage students to work out the challenges of passing difficult courses.

Student reactions are varied throughout the campus.

"I'm paying more and, fortunately, I can pay that amount," said Janelly Ferrer, soph-

omore majoring in biology, "But, what if I was counting on that money alone, and then it changed on me and I can't go to school?"

John Mamud, a history major, has a different perspective on the manner.

"If I drop a class, Bright Futures would have wasted their time paying for me, the opportunity for another student to use this money is gone," Mamud said.

"It should be a priority because a merit-based scholarship program keeps students in Florida's colleges and gives an incentive for high school students to do well," Rionda said. He argues that the standards to renew the award every year in college should be raised.

In order to renew the award for the subsequent academic year recipients have to meet new credit hour requirements. The minimum requirement for full-time students is 24 credit hours per academic year, up from the previous 12 credit hours. This would be the equivalent of four classes per semester.

Also, it will no longer give Florida Academic Scholars a college-related expenses allowance, which was often used as gas money or to buy costly textbooks.

The recent changes have helped the state recover an estimated \$64 million dollars, \$34 million for making the award flat and \$30 million by requiring students to refund dropped courses.

FIU becomes first 'tree campus' in state by Arbor Day Foundation

MELODY REGALADO
Staff Writer

The house of blue and gold is going green on all its campuses.

FIU is the first university in the state of Florida to be certified as an official Tree Campus by the Arbor Day Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of trees and promoting education about it.

"It's a significant step toward being a leader and showing the community and other universities and students that we care about the environment and the importance of trees in our daily lives," said Julissa Castellanos, director of Operations at the Office of the Vice Provost at BBC and staff representative on the Campus Tree Advisory Committee.

One of the Arbor Day Foundation's programs, Tree Campus USA, helps "colleges and universities strive to engage their student body as well as their broader community to establish and sustain healthy community forests for the benefit of current and future residents," according to its Web site.

It identifies schools that successfully promote forestry on campus as well as in the community and provides them with a letter, plaque and flag of recognition.

University staff at the Biscayne Bay Campus applied for certification last semester on behalf of all three FIU campuses – Biscayne Bay, Modesto Maidique and the Broward Pines Center – and received notification of its approval Jan. 9.

FIU already met most of the eligibility criteria through its ongoing green initiatives, but it added to its continued efforts to incorporate students and staff.

"SEAS [School of Environment and Society] is supporting this initiative in every way we can,"

said Michael Heithaus, director of the School of Environment and Society and faculty representative on the Campus Tree Advisory Committee. "Increasing the amount of tree cover with native shade trees will help make it a nicer campus for everyone and also helps the environment."

The Arbor Day Foundation has set five standards for schools to follow to obtain certification, all of which FIU met.

They established a 13-member Campus Tree Advisory Committee composed of FIU staff, faculty, alumnus and a student as well as facility workers and community leaders. They meet to discuss priorities with trees and their maintenance, assist with projects and increase community awareness.

"I thought this would be a great opportunity to help the University and also learn more about botany outside of class," said Ryan Vogel, a senior double-majoring in parks management and environmental studies and student representative on the Campus Tree Advisory Committee. He is one of the representatives for the Modesto Maidique Campus.

They also established a Campus Tree Care Plan. Some of FIU's goals include planting native and low-maintenance plants, maintaining the quality of campus waters, and expanding tree canopy coverage at BBC by 25 percent by 2020.

"Increasing the tree canopy coverage will improve the quality of life for students on campus," said Victor Borges, an FIU alumnus with a master's in landscape architecture. "This certification will also help us in applying for funding to make these improvements."

Aside from fundraising to fulfill the needs of these projects, students and local community members have also engaged in activities and service-learning projects that offer opportunities for students to become hands-

Tree Campus Certification Standards

Standard 1 is the Campus Tree Advisory Committee: composed of campus and local community members who meet to discuss goals and priorities with tree maintenance and awareness.

Standard 2 is the Campus Tree Care Plan: goals established by the university on how to properly maintain trees and plans on how to educate the community about the importance.

Standard 3 is the Campus Tree Care Program's dedicated annual expenditures: funds set aside for the upkeep of the program on campus every year, including purchasing, maintenance and labor.

Standard 4 is Arbor Day Observance: dedicated to educating the campus and local community about the importance of the trees in their area where volunteers engage in hands-on service.

Standard 5 is the Service Learning Project: for university students to become involved in maintenance and education projects on campus through their courses.

on while promoting education about the local environment.

Through the help of these students and other volunteers, as well as the rest of the FIU community, the activities continue into the Spring semester, including Arbor Day and Earth Day events, campus and bay cleanup days, and meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 3:30 p.m. outside the library to care for the butterfly gardens. Castellanos encourages students to get involved, as student support goes a long way.

Aside from the impact this has on the earth, such as reducing carbon dioxide, FIU and other tree campuses benefit from more shade and a commitment to a greener lifestyle.

"For a lot of students, on either campus, FIU is our home," said Vogel. "It's important to have a good environment for learning, and a part of that is the natural environment, to have pleasant outdoor spaces to learn, play and grow."

For more information or to get involved, contact Jennifer Grimm at jgrimm@fiu.edu.

FOODGASM

Savory soups a fool-proof favorite for winter weather

Since soup is my favorite thing in the world, I want to share where I go for soup in a mostly soup-less Miami – if I can convince you to leave your house, that is. I hate when people say "it's too hot for soup," an attitude that has led restaurants to only serve soup in the winter, or eliminate variety (until this year most of us thought winter was 60 degrees and donning our newest hoodie). So it is hard to find a good, hearty, bowl of soup, but here are three of my favorites:

On a cold winter's day you can get a huge bowl of soy ramen at Hiro's Japanese Restaurant for \$8, which is pricey for soup, but you do not need to order anything else because aside from warming you up, this soup is filling, with lingering flavor. While most of us recognize ramen from our supermarket experiences with maruchan ramen – that cheapest of college student staples – traditional ramen is a noodle soup with a meaty broth and assorted toppings, usually in a thick, almost gelatinous broth.

Hiro's incarnation of soy ramen is perfect for this season because along with its Papa Bear sized bowl it also has a thick pork broth,

flavored with miso and served with a boiled egg, slices of roasted pork, bamboo shoots, spinach, seaweed, and yes, those dehydrated noodles we've all come to love. The broth is clear and full of flavor, served piping hot and apparently made fresh bowl to bowl because it takes longer to come out of the kitchen than other dishes. For a nice \$20 lunch between friends or lovers

order one soul-warming bowl of ramen and a few of the less expensive sushi rolls and share; there is definitely enough for two.

I must admit, though, that the one thing that turns me off is the soup's lack of nutritional value. Ramen by design is high in sodium, fat and carbohydrates and, besides the spinach, lacks vegetables and vitamins. But I can balance it out – one day this week I'll have ramen, the next day I will head to Aventura's Juice & Java.

Juice & Java is exactly what it sounds like – a small cafe that serves up fresh squeezed juices and other purely healthy foods. Think of this place as a small Whole Foods variant where every menu item is chock full of greens, grains and healthy protein

choices like grilled salmon, tofu or chickpeas. The most surprising thing on their menu is their selection of soups. I'm not a vegan so my first time at Juice & Java none of the soups sounded particularly good. "Vegetable or black bean?" my waitress asked. As a cook I know that vegan-style soups – as they are made here – are hard to make flavorful and savory. But the soup lover in me had to order one so I went for the vegetable soup.

This soup is phenomenal. How their chef made a rustic mush of vegetables in a clear warm vegan broth taste heavenly remains a mystery, but this soup is a must-try, even if you came out of the womb chewing on a t-bone. This soup is surprisingly satisfying, and even better – inexpensive at \$3 a bowl, and has every vegetable from cauliflower, to peas, to potatoes in it. Even without a meat based broth, this soup has almost a buttery mouth feel that is lacking from so many vegan dishes.

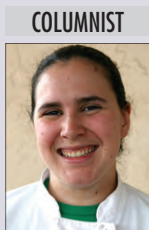
Speaking of Whole Foods, if I'm on the run and I want a healthy bowl of soup I grab a pint of their tomato zucchini soup. This soup keeps you warm because of how thick it is. Imagine eating delicious tomato sauce with earthy chunks of

fresh zucchini hidden in it and you have my favorite Whole Foods soup. Although just comprised of vegetables, this soup has the ability to stick to your ribs like no other. I haven't tried it yet, but I am pretty sure you can just pour this soup over pasta and it would pass for a foodgasmic marinara. It is tangy, salty, hearty and served piping hot.

I never go out to a new restaurant and not order the soup. And this

week in particular I'm going to need soup to get me through this weather, and it is always nice to find foodgasms along the way. Stay warm, eat soup.

Need help with a recipe or finding a place to eat? Bianca is here to help! Send any questions, comments or "Foodgasm" ideas to bianca.rojas@fiusm.com.



COLUMNIST

BIANCA ROJAS

Hiro's Japanese Restaurant
3007 NE 163rd St
North Miami Beach, FL 33160
(305) 948-3687

Juice & Java
20335 Biscayne Blvd
Aventura, FL 33180
(305) 466-2233

Whole Foods
21105 Biscayne Blvd
Miami, FL 33180
(305) 933-1543

CABRALITICS

Obama's approach to terrorism raises lots of eyebrows

Lately, there has been much hand-wringing over President Obama's anti-terrorism policies. In the wake of the failed terrorist attack on Christmas day, Republican critics have been eagerly attacking the President, who somehow failed to foresee the clear and present danger of terrorists wearing explosive undergarments determined to strike Detroit, America's cultural, spiritual and economic center (as of 1956).

Alhaji Umaru Mutallab, the would-be terrorist, had been suspected of radical leanings according to ABC News, and likely should have never been allowed to board a plane bound for the United States.

At the very least, he should have been forced to check his explosives in at the gate, and pay the \$30 fee required for all weapons of mass destruction brought aboard Northwest airlines flights.

Unfortunately, in a terrible failure of U.S. security procedures, he was able to board a flight to the U.S. in a pair of incendiary underwear.

In order to prevent further attacks, the administration has implemented a number of policy changes, yet there are a number of steps President Obama has failed to take that could in fact make America safer, or, at the very least, feel safer.

Plan A: Flight Gowns: In the aftermath of a failed terror attack in which a man hid an explosive in his underwear, it may be time to eliminate the threat of conven-

tional clothing altogether. From now on, people could be required to wear paper gowns, like the ones provided at hospitals, on every flight.

COLUMNIST



CHRIS CABRAL

Such gowns would make random strip searches easy, and as most people know, there is no hiding a bomb or anything else in those things.

Plus, members of terrorist organizations tend to have conservative social mores and they may shy away from any enterprise that requires them to wear such revealing attire. Yet perhaps this step may not be drastic enough to appease critics.

Plan B: Revive the Bush method of combating terrorism: As the President's critics in the GOP have said, President Bush would have handled this situation quite differently.

Perhaps Obama could try to emulate his predecessor, and in response to this attack by a man from Yemen, invade a completely unrelated country.

Some in the GOP might point to Iran as a worthy target, but Costa Rica would be much easier to invade, as they have no standing military and their close proximity would save greatly on gas mileage. Alas, such an invasion is not likely to gain much traction politically, so he might be forced to try a different approach.

Plan C: Abolish Flight: This is perhaps the most drastic measure, yet it is likely the best way to ensure that another terrorist

attack will never happen again in the U.S. involving airplanes. People would have to adjust, yet it is worth noting that most of history's great figures never boarded a plane and they did just fine.

Anything short of this would likely mean that another attack could occur at some time and place, and that is certainly something the Obama administration cannot allow, especially in an election year.

Given the challenges of combating

terrorism in the 21st century, there is no shortage of threats that could be lurking on the next flight, in the pants of someone determined to strike America. Yet with enough hard work and determination, the Obama administration could come up with a sweeping set of reforms that can ensure the nation's relative security. This reform package could prove to be one of the most impressive accomplishments of his presidency, until, like all things on Obama's agenda, it is ruined by Joe Lieberman.

LATE NIGHT SHAKE-UP



NBC makes rash decision by moving Leno to primetime

DAVID A. BARRIOS
Opinion Editor

The great experiment is officially over.

NBC announced on Jan. 10 that "The Jay Leno Show" would be taken off the air in February following extremely low ratings after its smash premiere in September of last year - and not a moment too soon.

Leno's show is set to have its finale just before NBC airs the 2010 Olympics. NBC Manager Jeff Gaspin has said that "Law and Order" re-runs along with extended "Dateline" specials will fill the slot until the fall.

Placing Leno on primetime at 10 p.m. was an extreme display of stupidity on a network that for the last decade has succeeded in moving from the No. 1 network in ratings to No. 4.

The mentalities behind the decision to bring Leno to primetime were two-fold. NBC, struggling for a consistently successful show

on primetime, saw its chance with Leno, whose ratings were consistently higher than his competition, David Letterman.

It just so happens that producing one episode of a late night talk show was much cheaper than producing an entire season of a fully scripted

no need to go through the process of experimenting with shows and taking time to develop a successful line-up like CBS did with shows such as "CSI" and "Two and a Half Men."

Putting aside the well-written and entertaining shows like "The

Perhaps the American public wasn't ready for late night to go primetime. Or perhaps, just perhaps, NBC is run by 5-year-old children.

television show. *Entertainment Weekly* reported that while one episode of "The Jay Leno Show" costs around \$200,000 to tape and produce, the average price of a one-hour television drama is somewhere around \$2,000,000.

NBC saw an easy way out of their slumping ratings with Leno:

Office" or "30 Rock," NBC has managed to let go of some excellently written shows. "Southland," an intelligent and gritty police procedural, had the potential to break the barriers of traditional network television and go toward the successful route which FX and HBO have been able to live on.

Or what about "Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip"? Or "My Name is Earl"? This is obviously a network that has no taste when it comes to maintaining quality shows.

Remember "Must See TV"? Thursday nights in the 1990s were dominated by shows like "Friends", "Seinfeld" and "E.R." The network was unstoppable. Times have changed.

You've got to question the thinking of NBC management. As Leno's ratings collapsed faster than Lindsay Lohan after a rave party, local affiliates grew frightened. Somehow, the fiscally sound concept had actually cost the affiliates viewers and advertising dollars.

It's not really Leno's fault. I personally can't recall a time when Leno got more than a chuckle out of me. He's safe and non-threatening in his comedy. He goes out and gets a few laughs and people seem to like him.

NBC threw Leno into the eye of the hurricane and expected that

by putting all their eggs into one basket, they'd be in business again. But it seems that people still enjoy their scripted dramas with shows like "CSI" and "Lost."

Perhaps the American public wasn't ready for late night to go primetime. Or perhaps, just perhaps, NBC is run by 5-year-old children with no future outlook on their network.

The victim in all of this however is none other than Conan O'Brien. O'Brien, who hosted "Late Night" for over 15 years has committed to NBC for the gig that he's undoubtedly coveted for some time. "The Tonight Show" is a show that is filled with the legacy of greats like Jack Parr and Johnny Carson. O'Brien's future must have seemed set, with his wife and children in California and a new set built.

Now Jeff Gaspin is trying to convince O'Brien to move back to a 12:05 a.m. slot to allow Leno to start at 11:35 p.m. If I were O'Brien, I would be calling Fox right about now.

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WINNER/LOSER

 Sarah Palin makes deals with satan, aka Fox News, and is now a part-time contributor and commentator for the cable news network. Fox hasn't announced the financial terms of the deal. The loser in this deal? The American people.

 Simon Cowell announced that he would be leaving "American Idol" at the end of this season, thereby making him just another footnote in American cultural history. Cowell will try to unleash another plague on America; a new show called "X-factor."

QUOTATIONATION

"NBC is going to throw Jay [Leno] and me in a pit with sharp sticks. The one who comes out alive gets to leave NBC."

Conan O'Brien
Host of "The Tonight Show," on schedule issues.

Event promotes school pride through video

ADRIAN ESPINOSA
Contributing Writer

FIU's latest school-spirited event, a "lip dub" video sponsored by the Office of Global Learning's Quality Enhancement Plan, Global Learning for Global Citizenship, will focus on spreading Panther pride on campus and around the world.

A lip dub is a video filmed with a song that merges lip-syncing and audio dubbing.

Participants are filmed lip-syncing to a song, which is then dubbed with the original track in post-editing.

The idea of producing a lip dub

music video has been used by other universities to promote school spirit, and many Panthers are excited to join in.

"We watched a few lip dub videos on the Web from other schools and thought they were funny and interesting," said Sarvin Khorrarn, a freshman majoring in biology. "I am positive it's going to be a great experience, especially since I'll be with my best friend."

Eventually, this video will make its way onto cyberspace through FIU's YouTube channel.

Since OGL is heading the production, its project centers on making sure students are aware of their school's commitment to global learning.

Global learning, as defined by the QEP, is the effort to promote different types of learning that transcend national borders and penetrate cultural barriers.

The event has its own Facebook group, which is updated regularly for anyone out there looking to keep track

of the production progress.

The song for the video has not yet been chosen. Students have the chance to vote for one of two front-runners via news.fiu.edu by searching the keyword, "lip dub." Popular hits by the Black Eyed Peas, "I've Got A Feeling" and "Let's Get It Started," are the proposed choices, and polls officially close on Jan. 12.

Choosing a song is not the only way to get involved; students can download a release form from the same site page and turn it in at PC 519, or bring it to the rehearsal on Jan. 23.

The Graham Center was chosen to host the festivities because it is easily one of the most recognizable buildings in FIU, having been featured in Chris Brown's "Kiss Kiss" music video.

Kharla Salazar, a sophomore majoring in philosophy, shared her reason for deciding to participate.

"One of my professors had been in the 'I Am FIU' video, so I thought this would be a great project to be a part of

since the first one had such a cool idea backing it," she said.

Heading the production is FIU alumnus and Director of Marketing & New Media, Eduardo Merille. Beginning the project just before the holiday season began, he quickly enlisted a significant number of followers on the Facebook group and is taking this project very seriously.

"We want the video to be, more than anything else, a fun activity for FIU students and the FIU community. It should also be something that brings us all together," he said.

The diversity seen within the groups' members is something that demonstrates this goal.

This project is not limited only to current students, as they are joined by alumni who also embrace the idea; converging current and deep-rooted Panthers and bringing them together in a fashion they hope others will find entertaining and engaging.

Avatar sparks debate over perceived racist messages

JESSE WASHINGTON
Associated Press

Near the end of the hit film *Avatar*, the villain snarls at the hero, "How does it feel to betray your own race?" Both men are white — although the hero is inhabiting a blue-skinned, 9-foot-tall, long-tailed alien.

Strange as it may seem for a film that pits greedy, immoral humans against noble denizens of a faraway moon, *Avatar* is being criticized by a small but vocal group of people who allege it contains racist themes — the white hero once again saving the primitive natives.

Since the film opened to widespread critical acclaim three weeks ago, hundreds of blog posts, newspaper articles, tweets and YouTube videos have made claims such as that the film is "a fantasy about race told from the point of view of white people" and reinforces "the white Messiah fable."

The film's writer and director, James Cameron, says the real theme is about respecting others' differences.

In the film (read no further if you don't want to spoil the plot) a white, paralyzed Marine, Jake Sully, is mentally linked to an alien's body and set loose on the planet Pandora.

His mission: persuade the mystic, nature-loving Na'vi to make way for humans to mine their land for unobtainium, worth \$20 million per kilo back home.

Like Kevin Costner in *Dances with Wolves* and Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai* or as far back as Jimmy Stewart in the 1950 Western *Broken Arrow*, Sully finds his allegiances soon change.

He falls in love with the Na'vi princess and leads the bird-riding, bow-and-arrow-shooting aliens to victory over the white men's spaceships and mega-robots.

Adding to the racial dynamic is that the

main Na'vi characters are played by actors of color, led by a Dominican, Zoe Saldana, as the princess. The film also is an obvious metaphor for how European settlers in America wiped out the Indians.

Robinne Lee, an actress in such recent films as *Seven Pounds* and *Hotel for Dogs*, said that *Avatar* was "beautiful" and that she understood the economic logic of casting a white lead if most of the audience is white.

But she said the film, which remained number one at the box office domestically for the fourth straight weekend with \$48.5 million and is second among all-time top-grossing films worldwide, still reminded her of Hollywood's "Pocahontas" story — "the Indian woman leads the white man into the wilderness, and he learns the way of the people and becomes the savior."

"It's really upsetting in many ways," said Lee, who is black with Jamaican and Chinese ancestry. "It would be nice if we could save ourselves."

Annalee Newitz, editor-in-chief of the sci-fi Web site, io9.com, likened *Avatar* to the recent film *District 9*, in which a white man accidentally becomes an alien and then helps save the aliens, and 1984's *Dune*, in which a white man becomes an alien Messiah.

"Main white characters realize that they are complicit in a system which is destroying aliens, AKA people of color ... (then) go beyond assimilation and become leaders of the people they once oppressed," wrote Newitz, who is white. "When will whites stop making these movies and start thinking about race in a new way?"

Black film professor and author Donald Bogle said he can understand why people would be troubled by *Avatar*, although he

praised it as a "stunning" work.

"A segment of the audience is carrying in the back of its head some sense of movie history," said Bogle, author of *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American*



Films.

Bogle stopped short, however, of calling the movie racist.

"It's a film with still a certain kind of distortion," he said. "It's a movie that hasn't yet freed itself of old Hollywood traditions, old formulas."

Writer/director Cameron, who is white, said in an e-mail to The Associated Press that his film "asks us to open our eyes and truly see others, respecting them even though they are different, in the hope that we may find a way to prevent conflict and live more harmoniously on this world. I hardly think that is a racist message."

There are many ways to interpret the art that is *Avatar*.

What does it mean that in the final, sequel-begging scene, Sully abandons his human body and transforms into one of

the Na'vi? Is Saldana's Na'vi character the real heroine because she, not Sully, kills the arch-villain? Does it matter that many conservatives are riled by what they call liberal environmental and antimilitary messages?

Is Cameron actually exposing the historical evils of white colonizers? Does the existence of an alien species expose the reality that all humans are actually one race?

Although the *Avatar* debate springs from Hollywood's historical difficulties with race, Will Smith recently saved the planet in *I Am Legend*, and Denzel Washington appears ready to do the same in the forthcoming *Book of Eli*.

Bogle, the film historian, said that he was glad Cameron made the film and that it made people think about race.

"Maybe there is something he does want to say and put across about race," Bogle said. "Maybe if he had a black hero in there, that point would have been even stronger."

PANEL PANEL

Life after Batman: mediocre at best

Out of all the events that occurred in DC's *Final Crisis*, one of the most devastating outcomes was the death of Bruce Wayne.

Gotham City has been left without its Dark Knight, and the ailing Justice League of America is missing yet another important hero.

As we mentioned last week, it's hard to keep caring about the death of comic book heroes when it's obvious they're just going to keep coming back.

Still, one of the more interesting things to look at when a major hero dies is the immediate circle of friends and apprentices that he leaves behind.

With Bruce Wayne gone, Dick Grayson, formerly Nightwing, has put on the cowl and assumed the role of Batman. Damien Wayne, Bruce's son, has taken on the mantle of Robin and now serves as Dick's sidekick.

The story with the most potential, however, is of Tim Wayne, the adopted son of Bruce Wayne.

Leaving Damien to take over his old role as Robin, Tim takes on the mantle of Red Robin.

Tim is the only person convinced that Bruce is still alive.

At first we're presented with a touching and compelling story of someone looking to defy the odds and

find a hero that everyone else has given up on, but then we're led through a winding mess of irrelevance.

Feeling betrayed by a world that is so quick to accept Bruce's death and move on, Tim begins a solitary journey to find his mentor and father.

His journey takes him to Europe, where Christopher Yost quickly muddles the focus of the *Red Robin* series.

Tim becomes entangled with Ra's al Ghul, who also believes that Bruce is alive and plans to use Tim as a pawn in order to get Bruce for his own plans.

Tim decides to play along with Ra's game and accepts an offer to join the League of Assassins in order to help them fight the Council of Spiders, an enemy of the league.

Tim decides this is a perfect opportunity to get access to Ra's resources and take the League down from within.

If this sounds convoluted and far-fetched, that's because it is.

After successfully fighting off the Council of Spiders, Tim is able to blow up various hideouts of the League of Assassins by overloading its network, because things explode when a network is congested, apparently.

Despite the mediocre story, the most frustrating thing about *Red Robin* is the wasted potential. In fact, the most touching point in Tim's tale hasn't even come from his own series.

In *Adventure Comics*, Conner "Superboy" Kent travels to Europe to see how his best friend is doing.

Conner and Tim exchange a heartfelt conversation where Conner pokes and prods at Tim to reveal his true feelings and motives.

Conner points out that Tim is wearing Jason Todd's costume: the "bad" Robin. The heavy, leather cowl and isolation are just methods of punishing himself until Bruce Wayne returns.

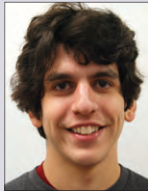
There is some hope on the horizon of this series, however.

With Ra's al Ghul threatening to attack Wayne Industries in response to the attack on his League of Assassins, Tim is forced to return to Gotham City to protect his father's company and rejoin the midst of the Batcave.

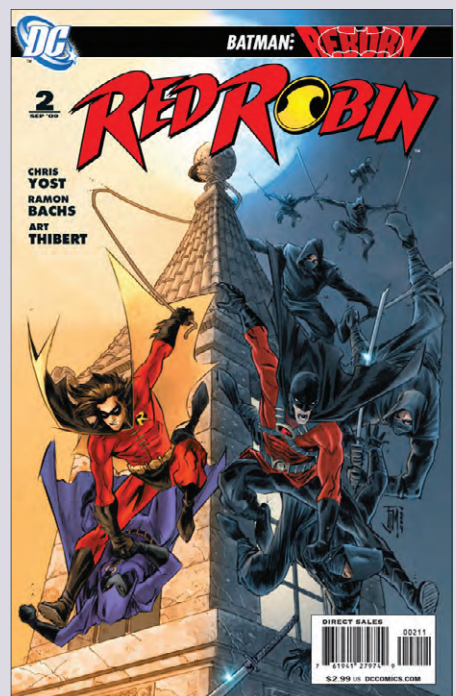
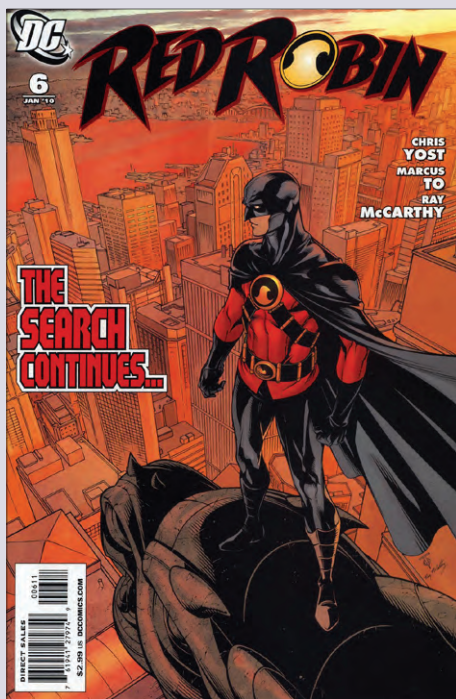
With the *Red Robin* series potentially getting back on track and DC officially announcing Bruce Wayne's return in an upcoming limited series starting in April, there's going to be plenty of chances for this series to redeem itself and for Tim Wayne's story to have the meaningful spotlight it deserves.

Panel Panel is a weekly comics column written in tandem by Sean Gonzalez and Pablo Penton. Look for it every Wednesday.

COLUMNIST



PABLO PENTON



School of Music showcases Viennese-inspired compositions

ASHLEY CAPO
Staff Writer

in Jan. of 1902.

Directing the works will be Robert B. Dundas, associate professor of music and founder/director of the Opera Theater at FIU, and Jennifer Renee Snyder, a member of the School of Music staff who will act as the voice and opera coach.

Joel Galand, professor of music history, will be hosting the event.

The concert doors will open at 7 p.m. at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center, Jan 14.

Tickets will be sold at \$10 for students; \$15 for FIU faculty, staff and seniors; \$25 general admission.

You may purchase your tickets at the School of Music box office or you can purchase tickets online www.cartafiu.edu.

Be sure to check out the events calendar for all concert dates and all other performances being held by the College of Architecture and the Arts.

The FIU School of Music kicks off 2010 with a concert event Jan. 14 titled "From Gold to Silver: a Viennese Soiree" at the Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center Concert Hall.

The concert will feature students of the FIU Opera Workshop, a course at the University that exposes students to operatic literature and performance.

The works of three influential European composers of the late 1800s, early 1900s will be showcased.

Viennese composers, Johann Strauss Jr. and Karl Michael Ziehrer, known rivals of their time, and Hungarian composer Franz Lehar. Lehar's best known masterpiece "Gold und Silber," inspires the name for the event as it was written for the Princess Pauline von Metternich's Gold and Silver ball

Diversions



3		8	7	9	
	1	7	2		
4		8		6	
7	4		5		1 2
	2	7	6	9	4
8	3			1	5 6
		6		5	7
			2	8	3
7		9	5		1

To solve the sudoku puzzle, every row, column and 3x3 box must contain the numbers 1-9 only once. Check your answers in Friday's issue.

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: FIU VS. MTSU

FIU faces tough road matchup

STEPHANIE GABRIEL
Asst. Sports Director

The FIU women's basketball team will hit the road in an attempt to defeat the reigning Sun Belt Conference champion Middle Tennessee on Jan. 13.

The Blue Raiders were the team to beat last season and have been for a while as they've dominated the conference with five championships in the past six seasons.

As they head into Wednesday's game at the Murphy Center, the Golden Panthers (7-10, 2-4 Sun Belt) have concerns as they have not topped the Blue Raiders (9-5, 4-1 SBC) since the 2005-2006 season.

Leading the Blue Raiders and the entire conference in scoring is senior Alysha Clark.

The forward, who was named

Newcomer and Player of the Year last season, averages 23.8 points per game and is shooting 62 percent this year.

FIU was dominated last season in two matchups against Middle Tennessee.

The first was a 68-35 loss on the road in which Clark dropped 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds.

The second game was a 20 point defeat in Miami where Clark was even more successful, dropping 32 points.

Point guard Michelle Gonzalez, along with forward Elisa Carey, will likely be the main threats for FIU.

Both players are averaging just over 11 points per game while Carey also leads the team in rebounding with 9.8 per game.

Senior Monika Bosilj will look to contribute after a game-high, 19-point performance in a loss against Troy last week.

In the loss to Troy, the Golden Panthers rallied back from a 15 point deficit during the second half but were unable to finish down the stretch, as they were downed 61-59.

Meanwhile, the Blue Raiders are also coming off a loss to a conference opponent, Arkansas-Little Rock.

The defeat marked the team's first SBC loss of the season.

Clark was successful once again, even after missing the two previous games, with 24 points and 10 rebounds.

Middle Tennessee holds a scoring advantage with a conference-high 69.7 points per game while FIU is averaging just over 60.

The Golden Panthers have also struggled from beyond the arc lately going 10-for-37 over the past two games, both of which have been losses.



VICTORIA LYNCH/THE BEACON

Walk-on point guard Stephen Miro has been playing major minutes for the Golden Panthers, starting the last two games.

USF coach threatens legal action

FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

Former South Florida football coach Jim Leavitt wants his job back, insisting his dismissal for allegedly striking one of his players and then lying about the incident was unwarranted.

"The allegations were misrepresented. I said that from day one, and I don't care how long it takes, I'm in this for my life — my name, my reputation, my family," Leavitt said Monday during a news conference at the office of his attorneys.

Leavitt was fired last week after a university investigation concluded he grabbed one his players by the throat, slapped the athlete in the face and then lied about what occurred during halftime of a game against Louisville on Nov. 21.

The school is standing by its findings.

"We believe the reviewers, both internal and external, were fair, thorough

and professional in finding that the head coach crossed a line in terms of his conduct," vice president communications Michael Hoad said.

Leavitt would not discuss specific of the incident, citing legal reasons. Asked if he choked and slapped a player, the coach said: "Absolutely not. I've said that from day one."

Leavitt just finished the second season of a seven-year, \$12.6 million contract extension that calls for a base salary of \$800,000 in 2010.

Prior to the news conference, the law firm of Florin Roebig released a statement on behalf of Leavitt, saying the firing "is contrary to the terms of his contract" and violates the coach's constitutional rights.

The statement said Leavitt "fully and voluntarily" cooperated with the university investigation and consistently denied any wrongdoing. It also noted the player and player's father had denied the coach acted

improperly.

"Based upon the facts (rather than the conclusions) of the university's investigation," the statement continued, "coach Leavitt's termination is unwarranted, and he deserves to be immediately reinstated in full to his former position."

Citing Miller's father, high school coach and five USF players who were not identified, AOL FanHouse reported that Leavitt hit Miller because he was upset about a mistake the player made on special teams.

Miller's father later backtracked, telling reporters the coach did not strike his son but rather grabbed him by the shoulder pads while trying to motivate the player.

Leavitt, who started USF's program from scratch and had a 13-season record of 95-57, told investigators he has never struck a player. He said was trying to lift the spirits of a player who was "down" when he grabbed the player's shoulder pads

during halftime of the Louisville game.

The probe concluded the coach's account was not credible because it was not supported by statements obtained from others, who either witnessed the incident or were told of it by the player.

Asked why he would want to stay at a university that doesn't want him, the coach said it would be best for the program to keep the current staff together.

"That's not difficult for me," Leavitt said.

Golden Panthers offensive woes continue as of late

MEN'S, page 8

energy and court awareness," Thomas said. "He runs the team well. I like what I see in him and every week in practice he's getting better."

OFFENSIVE DEFENSE

After giving up 84 points to Troy in a loss at home on Jan. 9, FIU continued to give up points at an alarming rate.

The Golden Panthers allow the most points in the Sun Belt Conference at 77.4.



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BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY BEST ART DIRECTION BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

"ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR. INCREDIBLY POWERFUL!"
AIN'T IT COOL NEWS HARRY KNOWLES

"SAOIRSE RONAN IS EXTRAORDINARY."
NEWSWEEK DAVID ANSEN

"STANLEY TUCCI IS MAGNIFICENT."
ROLLING STONE PETER TRAVERS

"PETER JACKSON SCORES AGAIN!"
TODAY GENE SHALT

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD NOMINEE
STANLEY TUCCI
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

SCREEN ACTORS GUILD AWARDS NOMINEE
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EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENTS NOW PLAYING EVERYWHERE JANUARY 15

Weekend series marred by cold

JOEL DELGADO
Asst. Sports Director

While most of South Florida tried to hide from the cold this weekend, the Golden Panthers swimming and diving team was forced to take on the elements in back-to-back meets over the weekend.

"Bad," Coach Noemi Lung-Zaharia summed up the meets in one word. "It's been such an extreme that we were just trying to stay warm and not get injured. It's been tough on everybody."

FIU VS. WPI & IRSC

The Golden Panthers hosted Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Indian River State College on Jan. 8

at home and wound up with mixed results, defeating WPI by a score of 153-23 while IRSC narrowly came out on top with a 108-80 win over FIU.

Namiko Shibata finished first in both the 3-meter and 1-meter diving events while attaining an NCAA Diving Zone qualifying mark with a 286.95 score on the 1-meter.

FIU also found success in the 200-yard medley, coming in first place against WPI while coming in second against IRSC with a time of 1:56.09.

The squad would continue to dominate WPI with first place finishes coming.

FIU VS. FLORIDA ATLANTIC

The Golden Panthers traveled

up the Turnpike the next day to take on conference rival Florida Atlantic in Boca Raton. The Owls proved to be too much, defeating FIU 135-87.

Shibata picked up where she left off the day before, finishing the day with first place finishes in both the 3-meter and the 1-meter diving events.

Carrie Foster, Kelly Grace, Kariann Stevens and Mariangela Macchiavello combined for a first place finish in the 200-yard freestyle relay to finish the meet on a high note.

"I'm proud of them for doing their best in this weather," Zaharia said of her team. "We have a tough team and everybody supports each other. We're hoping for some warm



LESTER ESCOTO/THE BEACON

Kari-Ann Stephens helped the Golden Panthers swimming team take first place in the 200-meter freestyle relay twice in their two meets over the weekend on Jan. 8 and 9.

RECRUITING ROUNDUP

THE OTHER HALF

Sizing up FIU defensive commitments

The Golden Panthers' struggles last season were in large part due to a defensive unit that regressed in most areas from 2008.

FIU finished 119th out of 120 teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision in total defense in 2009, giving up nearly 500 yards per game.

New defensive coordinator Geoff Collins will look to turn around a unit with urgent needs along the defensive line and defensive backfield. A look at FIU's current verbal commitments on defense:

DEFENSIVE LINE:

With spots available following the departure of senior starters Justin West and Jonas Murell, FIU head coach Mario Cristobal and his staff have targeted their fair share of defensive tackles.

So far, the effort most notably has netted a commitment from Tampa Bay Tech's Greg Hickman, a three-star prospect according to *rivals.com*.

Hickman played some linebacker in high school as well, and reportedly will still take a few official visits before signing day. Hickman's teammate, Mark Grant, is also a verbal pledge. Grant is unranked by rivals, but *The Miami Herald* recruiting analyst Larry Blustein said he "is one of the best in the Tampa and got a lot of looks earlier in the year."

Looking for an instant contribution, FIU is also looking to go the junior college route for players, like they did with Thatcher Starling last season.

Kilgore J.C. defensive end Matt Jones, a three-star prospect, reports FIU as his only offer but has yet to give his commitment.

Northwestern High's Todd Chandler will take an official visit to FIU before signing day, but is currently committed to USF.

That commitment is shaky at best, however, as Chandler is publicly interested in a couple of schools and already has switched commitments before.

Norland High defensive tackles Wade Issac and Tray Schley are also committed. Both have flown under the radar throughout the process, but Blustein said Isaac is "very athletic" and is ready to play right away.

LINEBACKER:

Like wide receiver on offense, the linebacker position for FIU features depth and talent all over the field. Freshman Markeith Russell and Kenny Dillard impressed at times, but the starters next season should be Toronto Smith, Aaron Davis and Winston Fraser. Hollywood Hills linebacker Caleb Vincent is the lone linebacker commitment for now.

CORNERBACK:

The defensive backfield is FIU's biggest need position besides offensive and defensive line.

With commitments from cornerbacks Richard Leonard, Khambrel McGee and Mac Brown, FIU has found the most success in recruiting this year with this group.

Blustein raves about Leonard: "He's the best recruit [FIU] has ever had. He will lock people down and he just doesn't get beat."

Blustein added that Leonard even ran the wildcat formation for Killian High, and should make up for his short stature (5-foot-8).

Leonard and McGee are three-star prospects and Brown holds Southeastern Conference offers from Mississippi and Auburn, but still committed to the Golden Panthers.

FIU needs depth at cornerback with O'Darris D'Haiti and Peter Riley graduating, and with Jerrell McGee potentially missing the start of the season as he recovers from knee surgery.

Dez Johnson is expected to receive a medical redshirt from the NCAA, and will likely pair up with Anthony Gaitor as the starting cornerback tandem next season.



MIAMI HERALD/COURTESY PHOTO

Northwestern H.S. defensive back Khambrel McGee, right, is one of three cornerbacks and six defensive backs among FIU's defensive verbal commits.

SAFETY:

Ash Parker is attempting to return from a second knee surgery but hasn't played significantly since 2007. Starting free safety Jeremiah Weatherspoon is graduating. In turn, committed safeties Justin Halley, Randy Williams and Sam Miller will bolster the heart of the defensive backfield.

Freshman Jonathan Cyprien played well in substitute of Parker, and will likely start again in 2010. Competition will be abundant opposite Cyprien, however.

Blustein said Halley is not as prepared to have an early impact as Miller and Williams. Miller possesses nice athleticism, and Williams has very good size (6-foot-2, 190 pounds). Williams' high school coach at Miami Springs, Alex Pacheco, said the reason why Williams has been overlooked by many was due to his academics, which he is working on in order to qualify.

"Randy's a stud. He has phenomenal breakaway speed and is a heavy hitter," Pacheco said.

MEN'S BASKETBALL NOTEBOOK

Forward Watson suspended; Miro steps into lineup

JONATHAN RAMOS
Sports Director

Junior guard Antoine Watson is suspended indefinitely due to a violation of team rules.

FIU head coach Isiah Thomas would not confirm the report after Watson did not suit up for the team's win against ULM on Jan. 7, but the news was validated soon thereafter.

Watson has not been determined.

The transfer from Redlands Community College is averaging 10.4 points per game and 3.5 rebounds in his first season as a Golden Panther, in addition posting a team-best 22 three-pointers.

Watson averaged 24.8 points last year at Redlands to put himself in position to join Thomas' first recruiting class last spring.

Watson's minutes will likely be filled by junior guards Tremayne Russell and Martavis Kee. Kee, a transfer from Temple, gained eligibility to play just six games ago and is averaging 3.5 points in 13 minutes.

FRESH START

After a decorated high school career, FIU point guard Steven Miro took an unusual route to playing

college basketball. Miro, a former *Miami Herald* All-Dade performer while at La Salle High School, decided to pass on scholarship offers.

Just 16 years old at the time, Miro stayed home to work on his game while continuing to play with Puerto Rico's national under-19 squad.

"They wanted me to go play right away, but I wanted to wait until I was

18," Miro said about his college offers in 2008. "Here I am not on scholarship, but my family is close and Puerto Rico is close. All the offers I was getting were from Boston and Connecticut, and I didn't like the weather. I just felt FIU was the best fit for me because of my language."

So far, it's hard to argue with his decision.

With Phil Gary Jr. battling knee tendinitis, Miro got his first career start and scored seven points in the Golden Panthers' 62-56 win vs. ULM, and got another nod in the team's blowout loss to Troy on Jan. 9.

The freshman climbed the depth chart and became Gary's backup recently, and is now a factor in the Golden Panther rotation.

"Steve has been playing great as of now with his



WATSON