

WE LIKE YOU MR.FIU



CARL-FREDERICK FRANCOIS/THE BEACON

Student Government Association elects the new Mr.FIU Ramon Soria Jr. Former Mr.FIU Philip Koenig was the second ever Mr.FIU, making the Soria the third generation king.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Scholarship Code approaches compromise

ASHLEY MARTINEZ
Staff Writer

The Student Government Association scholarship code received the approval to move forward.

With 20 in favor and five against, the controversial scholarship code was approved under senate resolution 1231 during a Student Government Council meeting at the Modesto Maidique Campus senate session that took place last Monday.

In last week's senate session, Laura Farinas, president of SGC-MMC, presented various issues that would affect the piece of legislation presented. Alex Castro, vice president of SGC-MMC, said everyone should act like adults while dealing with the issue.

"I know that last week was an interesting and controversial week but let's simply be adults and move forward for the issue at hand," Castro said. "Let's get to work because I don't think it's the best thing for this senate to deal with political warfare when there's progress that needs to be done."

One of the issues presented deals with the University-wide committee, which, according to Farinas, should have seen the legislation first. Giovanni Castro, senator at-large and senate speaker, said the senate section article 4 in the U-Wide constitution, titled Amendments and Establishment, states that election codes and scholarships must be passed by the

SEE CODE, PAGE 2

Narcotics and theft, a semester-wide occurrence

DIEGO SALDANA
Staff Writer

Hide your phones and hide your wallets, thefts are the most common crime at the University.

There have been 130 thefts and 55 arrests so far recorded this semester. More than half of the reported thefts were of cell phones, wallets and laptops while 28 of the arrests were narcotics related.

University Chief of Police Alexander Casas said the majority of the theft cases were opportunistic, in which the victims had not been vigilant over their stolen

items.

"This is actually a very safe place [but] you still have to reduce the opportunities for the opportunists," Casas said.

"I don't feel comfortable leaving my personal belongings at school because there have been many thefts before... I don't feel it's secure. If I'm in the library, I never leave my laptop or purse unattended even if someone else is watching my things," said Aman Onallah, senior international relations major.

Senior music major Elexis Ansley is not at the number of thefts that have occurred and

thinks most of the culprits are students who steal to sustain themselves.

"Kids are poor, if they find something and someone's not looking [then they are going to steal]," Ansley said.

The majority of arrests were narcotics related with a total of 28 accounted for, according to recent reports.

Casas said narcotics is the most common reason for arrests to be issued. He explained how the department apprehends suspects.

"We will usually get called by an anonymous complaint or we'll happen upon an area where

people are engaging in [narcotics-related] activities," Casas said.

Senior psychology major Jonathan Aguilar de Dios is surprised at the number of narcotics arrests this semester.

"That's kind of crazy. I didn't think there were that many narcotics issues being dealt with in our school," Aguilar de Dios said.

Casas said the most common narcotic confiscated is marijuana.

"I'm definitely not surprised. It's a common drug among college students," said Carlos Caba, senior political science

major.

Ansley thinks the use and possession of narcotics is an unintelligent move on the part of students.

"It's stupid to use drugs while at school," Ansley said.

Some of the semesters most peculiar cases include an abandoned boat by BBC, a taxi driver not getting paid his fare outside of the Graham Center and a fire on the nature preserve.

Additional reporting by Miriam Arias and Natalie Montaner.

-news@fiusm.com

Students 'question their earlier, untested beliefs

ALYSSA ELZO
Contributing Writer

"Teaching is not just providing students with information so that they can regurgitate it, but engaging them through debate and simulations so they may become critical thinkers," said International Relations Professor Elton Skendaj.

Born in Albania under a communist regime, Elton Skendaj was taught to accept the information given to him without the ability to challenge or question the premise. By the time he was 14 years old, the political system of Albania was revolutionized, allowing Skendaj to travel abroad for the first time.

He was awarded a scholarship to attend The American University in Bulgaria, where he became fascinated with the idea of democracy and free markets that were not found in Albania.

During his collegiate studies at The American University, Skendaj was highly influenced by the teaching styles of his professors. He said, "My professors were very open-minded. They often had us debate or present in class, allowing us to question assumptions and reevaluate what we had previously been taught." He enjoyed learning in this way and now applies it into his own style of teaching.

SEE SKENDAJ, PAGE 2

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS A TIME WHEN BUSY PEOPLE CAN BECOME CARELESS AND VULNERABLE TO THEFT AND OTHER HOLIDAY CRIME. DURING THE HOLIDAYS MAKE A POINT OF ENSURING YOUR SAFETY. HERE ARE SOME SAFETY TIPS YOU MIGHT WANT TO FOLLOW:

- PUT ALL STORE BOUGHT PACKAGES IN THE TRUNK, NOT YOUR BACK SEAT.
- MAKE SURE TO LOCK ALL DOORS OF YOUR CAR.
- PARK IN WELL LIGHTED AREAS OF THE STORES OR MALLS. KEEP ALERT WHEN WALKING TO YOUR CAR.
- LOOK AROUND TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF TO WHERE YOU PARKED YOUR VEHICLE AND WHAT LOT.
- IF SHOPPING AT NIGHT, GO WITH A FRIEND. STAY ALERT!
- WOMEN SHOULD WEAR THEIR PURSES ACROSS THEIR BODY.
- REMEMBER TO GET YOUR CREDIT CARD BACK AFTER PURCHASES. KEEP THE RECEIPTS TO CONFIRM PURCHASES.
- DON'T LET ANYONE SEE YOUR PIN NUMBER WHEN USING A DEBIT CARD.
- CONSOLIDATE PACKAGES INTO ONE BIG BAG IF POSSIBLE.
- IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE DRINKING ALCOHOL OVER THE HOLIDAYS, DRINK IN MODERATION OR HAVE A DESIGNATED DRIVER READY TO DRIVE YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HOME.
- AVOID WEARING EXPENSIVE JEWELRY OR EXCESSIVE JEWELRY, WHILE SHOPPING. DRESS IN CASUAL WEAR.
- AVOID CARRYING LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH. USE A DEBIT OR CREDIT CARD IF YOU CAN.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pot legalization no free ride to smoke on campus

NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
AP Staff

Young voters helped pass laws legalizing marijuana in Washington and Colorado, but many still won't be able to light up.

Most universities have codes of conduct banning marijuana use, and they get millions of dollars in funding from the federal government, which still considers pot illegal.

With the money comes a requirement for a drug-free campus, and the threat of expulsion for students using pot in the dorms.

"Everything we've seen is that nothing changes for us," said Darin Watkins, a spokesman for Washington State University in Pullman.

So despite college cultures that include pot-smoking demonstra-

tions each year on April 20, students who want to use marijuana will have to do so off campus.

"The first thing you think of when you think of legalized marijuana is college students smoking it," said Anna Marum, a Washington State senior from Kelso, Wash. "It's ironic that all 21-year-olds in Washington can smoke marijuana except for college students."

Voters in November made Washington and Colorado the first states to allow adults over 21 to possess up to an ounce of marijuana, and exit polling showed both measures had significant support from younger people. Taxes could bring the states, which can set up licensing schemes for pot growers, processors and retail stores, tens or hundreds of millions of dollars a year, financial analysts say.

But the laws are fraught with complications, especially at places like college campuses. At Washington State, students who violate the code face a variety of punishments, up to expulsion, Watkins said. The same is true at the University of Colorado Boulder, where the student code of conduct prohibits possessing, cultivating or consuming illegal drugs.

"If you possess marijuana and are over 21, you still may face discipline under the student code of conduct," Huff said.

Gary Gasseling, deputy chief of the Eastern Washington University police department, said that while they await guidance from the state Liquor Control Board, which is creating rules to govern pot, one thing is clear.

"The drug-free environment is

going to remain in place," he said.

Even if conduct codes did not exist, marijuana remains illegal under federal law, another key reason that campuses will remain cannabis-free.

The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act requires that any university receiving federal funds adopt a program to prevent use of illicit drugs by students and employees, much in the same way other federal funding for law enforcement and transportation comes with clauses stipulating that recipients maintain drug-free workplaces.

Washington State, for instance, receives millions in federal research funds each year, which prohibits them from allowing substances illegal under federal law on campus.

College dormitory contracts

also tend to prohibit possession of drugs, officials said. Dorms and other campus buildings also tend to be smoke-free zones, which would block the smoking of marijuana, officials said.

At Eastern Washington, there is a student-led movement to ban smoking even outside across the entire campus, Gasseling said.

In addition, NCAA rules prohibit student-athletes from consuming marijuana or other illegal drugs.

With all these complications, it is reasonable to expect that some students will be confused by the new laws.

"Some type of communication is going to come out from the university to clarify this," said Angie Weiss, student lobbyist for the Associated Students of the University of Washington.

Final version to be seen by senate in spring

CODE, PAGE 1

senate before being discussed at U-Wide meetings.

"It's been a controversial issue at U-Wide meetings with certain leaderships but it's here in black and white," Castro said. "Once this passes, if it passes here, it will be passing in the [Biscayne Bay Campus] senate and it will be going to U-Wide."

Michelle Castro, assistant director for Campus Life

and SGA advisor, said the U-Wide committee was aware of the piece, but added that the University's Chief Financial Officer Kenneth Jessell had yet to make a decision in regards to the use of funding from the accounts.

"It has been discussed with U-Wide committee and they are aware of the situation. There have been conversations with the CFO but they have not finalized the decision of what is actually happening

with the interest of the accounts. Right now they are finalizing meetings to determine what those numbers look like," Michelle Castro said.

Also present at the meeting was Tony Vu, University treasurer, who said the piece of legislation had no barriers from the administration.

"We think this is great," Vu said. "We don't have any issues with any of the things that you are proposing as far as the technicality and the financial side of it."

During discussion, Moses Aluicio, senator for the College of Law, made two motions to add law students and medical

students, in replacement of the Junior Academic Scholarship, to the list, which were approved along with other changes including the Student Government Senior Scholarship being changed into an Upperclassmen Scholarship.

At the U-Wide meeting that took place on Nov. 27, Pablo Haspel, president of the Student Government Council at BBC, said that some changes were made to the bill to please all members of the group. Changes include a scholarship that will promote the six-year graduation and retention rate, setting financial requirements for the interna-

tional and parent scholarship and making a mandatory one percent for the first generation scholarship.

"We are all more or less happy with the outcome," Haspel said. "Over the last two or three hours we've been meeting to make sure everyone's on the same page in regards to the scholarship."

Haspel also said that meetings will be held with University administrators to ensure that no problems are involved in the piece.

Farinas said that the group had met before the meeting to revise the piece of legislation and still aim to join both

proposals presented previously at one of the meetings in order for them to present a final proposal at the beginning of next semester.

"We actually discussed joining the proposals and how we will give out the task of running it through the different venues," she said.

The final proposal would be presented during the first senate session of the spring to be voted upon for the piece to come back to the U-Wide committee.

Additional reporting by Mariella Roque.

-news@fiusm.com

CORRECTIONS

In Vol. 24, Issue 46 of The Beacon, the article "Badminton club at FIU exploding with interest" reference the club meeting at the Biscayne Bay Campus. It should have said that the club meets at the Modesto Maidique Campus.

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

United Nations trainer teaches in University

SKENDAJ, PAGE 1

Skendaj received a master's from the Department of Government at Cornell University and a master's in International Peace Studies from The University of Notre Dame.

After graduating, Skendaj returned to Albania where he developed his own peace education project, which was funded by the United Nations. The purpose of his peace education program was to get the people of Albania to understand values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict through dialogue and negotiations.

While working for the UN, he became a trainer for international organizations that work alongside Israeli-Palestinian teachers, Peruvian teachers and West African Non-Governmental Organizations.

Of his time as a trainer for the UN he said, "I loved being among people of different backgrounds and upbringings. I enjoyed trying to challenge my own assumptions and beliefs by asking them questions and trying to understand why they thought a certain way and, in turn, sharing my own beliefs."

From his experience as a trainer he developed his philosophy of teaching. "I try to get students to question their earlier, untested beliefs and theories. I get them

to present to each other, because it is how they tend to learn better and I have them debate issues that are controversial, which don't always have easy solutions, to illustrate how the world of politics is complex."

At the age of 23, he served as a global youth representative for the UN and was asked to speak at the 56th United Nations DPI/NGO conference, "Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations," at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in front of a large audience. While at first he was nervous to speak, he reflected back on his education and used his experience in previous class debates to aid him in speaking on behalf of the UN.

This experience made him realized how beneficial debates and simulations could be to the learning process. As a result, he now implements debates and simulations in his teachings.

Apart from teaching, Skendaj has published various articles and wrote a book titled "Building State Bureaucracies and Democratic Institutions: The Role of International Actors in Kosovo" that Skendaj expects to be published by Cornell University Press and the Wilson Center Press between 2013 and 2014.

His manuscript focuses on how international actors build and sustain democracy and rule of law, while also identifying why some bureaucracies become effec-

tive in providing security and others public goods, while other bureaucracies remain caught up in corruption and ineffective post-war, like Kosovo.

As an international relations professor, he enjoys educating students on topics of peace, human rights, human security and international organizations, as he sees them as forces of good in the world.

When it comes to teaching in general, he enjoys student learning. "I find it cool when students are processing and changing their ideas or updating their beliefs," Skendaj said.

Before Skendaj arrived at FIU, he taught at both Cornell University and The University of Notre Dame. Since his arrival, he has enjoyed working with students at FIU due in part to their diverse backgrounds and the many different experiences they bring to the table.

When he is not teaching, Skendaj enjoys spending time with his wife and two children.

In spring 2013 semester, Elton Skendaj will teach the following courses at the Biscayne Bay Campus: INR 2001, Introduction to International Relations; INR 3081, Contemporary International Problems; INR 3502, International Organizations; and INR 4084, Ethnicity in World Politics.

-news@fiusm.com

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Modesto Maidique Campus:
GC 210, Mon-Fri 9:00 AM-4:30 PM
(305) 348-2709
news@fiusm.com

Biscayne Bay Campus
WUC 124, Mon-Fri 9:00 AM-4:30 PM
(305) 919-4722
bbc@fiusm.com

Editor-in-Chief:
(305) 348-1580
philippe.buteau@fiusm.com

Advertising:
(305) 348-6994
advertising@fiusm.com

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STILL WAITING

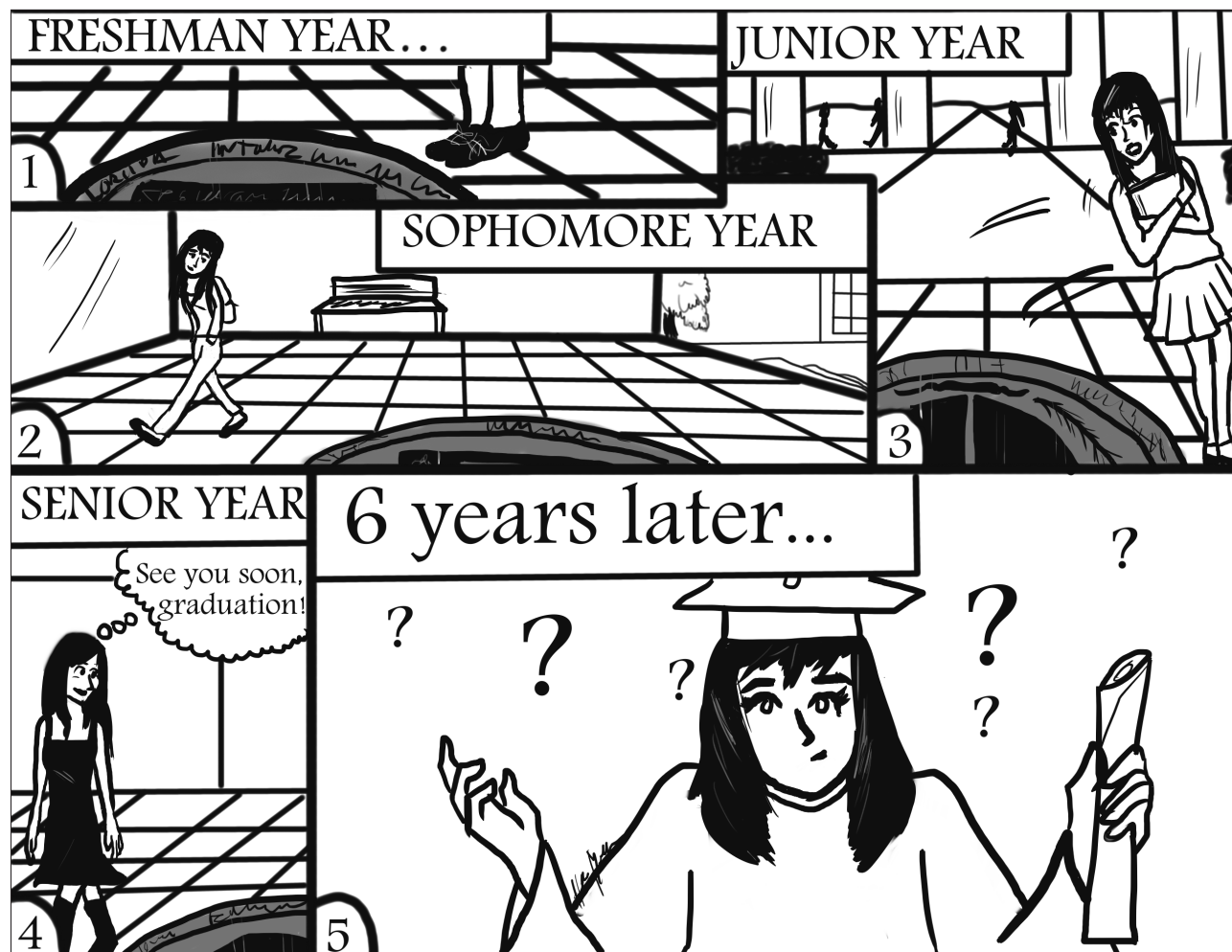


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There's no power in powerpoint

PHILIPPE BUTEAU
Editor-in-Chief

If your dream is to be a professor one day then make sure you drop two words from your vocabulary: power point.

While I'm pretty sure most students lean more towards liking power point presentations as their professors' tool for lecturing, my eyes roll once I realize that's what is in store for me for the next 15 weeks.

On one hand powerpoint presentations make note taking easy; all students have to do is download the slides and follow along as the professor lectures. However, for me "follow along" means daydream and for the professors "lecture" means read from the powerpoint.

It may not necessarily be a word-for-word read from the powerpoint but it still carries the monotone delivery of a powerpoint presentation. This is just one problem I have with powerpoint presentations as lectures. Every professor ends up sounding like Ben Stein.

I understand this can happen regardless of what means the professor uses to deliver his/her lectures, but I believe powerpoint presentations helps make their lectures "Stein-y."

Now combine that with the fact students who are watching a powerpoint presentation and listening to Professor Stein do not have to take notes. As I said students can download the slides online, from blackboard usually. What is there for a student to do in a class where notes do not have to be taken? Skip. Send text messages. Browse the Internet.

Some would do those things regardless, but others, like yours truly, would find a way of being engaging themselves with the class in one way or another.

When I am faced with a powerpoint lecture, as I was in spring and fall 2012, I avoid downloading the slides and force myself to take notes. The idea of forcing yourself to take notes may sound crazy to professors, but if you're tool for lecturing makes it so I don't have to, than why should I?

Something I also do when staring down the barrel of a powerpoint presentation is try to come up with questions for every or every other slide. Even if I don't ask the question, trying to come up with questions keeps me focused on what I'm listening to and seeing.

Again, a professor reading this may think students should be focused regardless.

Another problem with powerpoint presentations being a part of lectures. As much as I love how exciting a powerpoint presentation is to be a part of – there's a lot of sarcasm in there I'm sure every professor prepares a lesson for that particular day's lecture.

-philippe.buteau@fiusm.com

The truth about instructor evaluations

JUNETTE REYES
Staff Writer

The beginning of this semester saw the teachers of Chicago, Illinois go on strike, one reason being that they opposed the idea of their jobs being affected by the students' performance on standardized tests.

Our own University has its way of evaluating professors, though it is significantly different to the approach in Chicago; however, both inevitably leave it to the students, in one way or another, to determine how well a professor does his or her job.

Of course, this only seems reasonable; the students would seem to be the best candidates for such a task since they are, after all, the ones being taught by the professors in question.

It can also be argued, however, that not all students understand the importance of these evaluations or the importance of the role they play.

Not so surprisingly, these evaluations are a pretty big deal to the departments of the University. There might be

some slight differences from department to department when handling the evaluations, especially when determining the structure and time in which they are dealt with; however, it is all generally the same.

Professors are given a certain amount of time to have the evaluations distributed, filled out, and returned to their department, where the scantron and commentary sheets are reviewed.

The evaluations themselves are composed of a mandatory scantron sheet, in which eight of the questions are specifically mandated by the State while the rest are added by the University; an additional commentary sheet completes the evaluations set and is sometimes even more influential the Scantron sheet.

It is how these evaluations are taken into consideration from department to department that challenges the sensibility of allowing students to determine how well a professor does his or her job, especially because a misunderstanding of how important these evaluations

really are can lead to the dismissal of how seriously they should be taken.

The student evaluations are used as part of the overall assessment of the faculty, who are annually evaluated on their teaching, research, and service.

For the most part, student evaluations play a significant role in terms of the professor's pursuit of tenure. Professors may also take the commentary sheets into consideration when planning their future lectures.

But most importantly, particularly when dealing with adjunct professors, the evaluations are an influence in the rehiring of a professor.

Naturally, it would have to take more than one negative evaluation to seriously influence a professor's standing (it is fairly easy to differentiate a problem with the professor from a disgruntled student's effort for revenge).

Still, students should be careful and considerate of how they handle the evaluations so as not to misrepresent a professor.

Although it can be questionable to impart such a

responsibility on students, whose opinion of a teacher is so influenced by their personal performance in the class or something as trivial as the professor's attractiveness, there really isn't another option.

Broadening the University's awareness of its professors' in-class performance is necessary, which is why options such as random visits to the classroom could be useful; however, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University and the United Faculty of Florida prohibits random visits to the classroom and therefore requires that faculty members must be given two weeks' notice before they are visited in the classroom.

It may not seem sensible to have such high expectations, but if students were given an idea of their evaluations' value (or lack thereof) before submitting it, perhaps we could expect them to take it more seriously.

It is their education, after all, so they should take the initiative to improve it fairly.

-junette.reyes@fiusm.com

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Have something on your mind? Send your thoughts (400 words maximum) to jonathan.szydlo@fiusm.com or drop by our offices at either GC 210 or WUC 124. With your letter, be sure to include your name, major, year, and copy of your student ID. The Beacon will only run one letter a month from any individual.

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This is the Beacon's final issue for the fall semester. We will resume publication for the spring semester Jan. 7 **Happy Holidays!**

Miss FIU found her prince at the Mr. FIU pageant

SELIMA HUSSAIN
Staff Writer

The Mr. FIU pageant, organized by the Miss FIU Scholarship Committee, was held Monday night in the GC Ballrooms to not only crown the next Mr. FIU, but to raise scholarship money for the winner of the Miss FIU pageant in 2013.

"I think it's pretty cool that they decided to include the guys, because both a girl and a guy should be a face representative of FIU," said Santiago Figueroa, Student Alumni Association member.

The pageant began with a high energy dance performance from the Mr. FIU contestants that immediately pumped up the audience with school spirit and stamina. After the lively introduction, the contestants entered the talent portion of the contest, exhibiting their strengths through song, dance, humor, poetry--even athletic abilities.

"We definitely enjoyed the performances, they were very creative," said Shirley Armenteros, a pageant judge. "There was a lot of variety in terms of what people did."

Marc Mobley, another pageant judge, also found the performances entertaining.



ANDRES APONTE/THE BEACON

The Mr. FIU pageant was held on Monday, Nov. 26 at the GC Ballrooms. The contestants opened the pageant with a dance performance, which was followed by the talent portion of the event. Ray Sorio [second in line, from left to right] was crowned Mr. FIU.

"We're looking for someone who's really prepared and who's really thought about why they should be Mr. FIU. Someone who brought a lot of thought, energy, and passion into their performance," said Mobley.

In addition to the talent round, the pageant also included a "scenario" round in which each contender had to

respond to a hypothetical FIU situation. The scenarios ranged from silly to serious; one situation called for a 15-second line dance to be created by Ray Sorio, while another asked Chris Mazzara a Student Government involvement question.

The final round was a "Q&A" session where the three finalists, Fernando Trillo, Javier Morales, and

Ray Sorio, had to express why they wanted to be Mr. FIU.

Jessica Romero, publications chair of the Miss FIU Scholarship Committee, said coordinating the event was a team effort.

"We started brainstorming months ago, and used our past experiences of pageants we went to to decide what works and what doesn't

work. Ultimately, we just combined those ideas to create one amazing pageant for Mr. FIU," said Romero. "We were just trying to entertain the crowd, and find the best person to represent our University."

Philip Koenig, Mr. FIU 2011, believes that being Mr. FIU is a great opportunity to get involved.

"My advice to the future Mr. FIU is to speak clearly, smile, and just enjoy yourself," said Koenig. "In five years, all you're going to have are your memories, and you want to make the most of it."

In the end, Ray Sorio, a junior studying hospitality and tourism management, was crowned Mr. FIU.

"I honestly didn't believe it when they called my name," said Sorio. "It was a complete mystery and I was in complete and total shock, but I was really happy. It was surreal."

Sorio is a member of Pi Kappa Phi and last year's Dance Marathon's Golden Idol winner. Although Sorio initially didn't plan on running for Mr. FIU, he is happy he did and excited to hold the title.

"I just plan on continuing to be a hard-working, diligent student and to represent FIU the best way I can."

-selima.hussain@fiusm.com

STUDENT THOUGHTS

World is believed to be ending, for fifth time

ALFREDO APARICIO
Staff Writer

The "end of the world" is upon us, but when that will be exactly, and how, has been the subject of debate for some time.

The theory that says the world will end in 2012 is based on the Mayan Long Count calendar that begins in 3,114 B.C. and marks time around 384-year intervals called Baktuns. The 13th Baktun, a number sacred to the Maya, ends on Dec. 21, 2012.

Originally predicted by Christian radio host Harold Camping to be on May 21 and then on Oct. 21 2011, the infamous end of the world has yet to rear its ugly head. The latest date, Dec. 21, 2012, keeps the same date in a different month, but as the skepticism grows, so do the expectations.

The 2011 film, "2012," starring John Cusack, depicted the end of the world as a cleansing of sorts brought on by a massive tsunami, which wiped out everything and everyone not on a giant submarine built by the government.

Another theory suggests Earth will collide with Niribu ("Planet X"), though there is no evidence to confirm Niribu exists, dubbed by UFO Aficionado Nancy Leider, who claims to not only be in contact with aliens, but originally said the planet would cause a catastrophic disaster in May 2003, only to change the date to Dec. 21, 2012 later on.

Furthermore, no evidence exists to support the theory that solar storms, which are surges of electrical particles from the Sun making their way to Earth

and turning up the temperature, will be responsible for the end of the world.

The Mayans themselves believed the end would include a solar shift, violent earthquakes, and a Venus transit.

N. David Cook, a professor at the Department of History, believes that the world will end someday, just not this year.

"These stories have always been interesting to me because there is an 'end story' in many civilizations; this isn't the first one," said Cook. "It's something ingrained within the Mayan culture, as well as Christianity and other religious systems, so it's something I've come to expect, but the when is something humans aren't capable of saying."

The bandwagon of 2012, for Cook, has taken hold of people, in part, because of the increase in telecommunications and technology around the world.

"Facebook, twitter, the internet in general has created greater possibilities for the rapid spread of ideas," said Cook. "It's both good and bad because if the information is presented in a convincing fashion, people can be swayed into making irrational or dangerous decisions because people are always looking for answers but answers are never clear cut."

On an economic level, Cook believes 2012 has also been able to increase the global market economy by spawning successful books, movies and even tourist ventures to the Yucatan Peninsula, for example, the home of the Mayans.

"There are economic interests behind stimulating this belief, and while there are people that can afford to do so, they

[The end of the world] is something ingrained within the Mayan culture, as well as Christianity and other religious systems, so it's something I've come to expect, but the when is something humans aren't capable of saying.

N. David Cook
Professor
Department of History

will take advantage of this idea, but human existence is within our hands, so one has to be careful about how these ideas and myths are spread," said Cook. "Let's assume there's still a long time of life to look forward to, so we have to make sure this place we have is the same one we pass on."

Gustavo Gutierrez, a junior political science major, first heard about 2012 through internet articles and hearsay.

"I thought it was a silly notion, and still do, to think the world will end because an ancient calendar says so," said Gutierrez. "There is absolutely no evidence to back it up."

Alexandra Llarena, a junior history major, first heard about 2012 in high-school, when the world was supposedly set to end in August of 2012.

"I was so disinterested that I didn't even research the date; now they say it's in December, not to mention, the date has been changed several times, so what does

that tell you," said Llarena. "Considering that the Mayan calendar doesn't even count leap year, I don't know why people are so fascinated; it's a waste of time, so move on with your life. For me it's just four days till Christmas, nothing more."

Victor Guerrero, a junior anthropology major, believes people have believed 2012 because of the hype that has been made about it on the internet and through various media.

"I thought it was kind of funny because I never thought people would take it so seriously. I respect the Mayans and their culture and find them to be extremely intelligent people, but their 'super powers' didn't seem to help them with the Spanish," Guerrero said.

"I don't see any reason in believing something that has no merit; I don't think it will happen, and if it does, I can't help it, so it's not worth thinking about."

-alfredo.aparicio@fiusm.com

FIU bird absent, begging the question, who let the ducks out?

VICTORIA RIVERA
Contributing Writer

Amid finals and preparations for vacation, it may be difficult to notice, but the University seems to be missing a popular frequenter: ducks.

Where have they gone?

Although the reasons for their absence are not clear, ducks have specific needs for a habitat and alterations to it may cause them to leave.

Seema Sah, lab manager in the Department of Earth and Environment, tested University pond waters last semester.

"If the water was contaminated, then the animals in it, such as the fish and turtles, would not be there," Sah said.

None of the water samples in her lab reports, which were obtained from each pond, were contaminated last semester. Each of the water samples had a moderate concentration of chemicals, which is considered normal.

John Withey, assistant professor of biology and urban ecologist, researches terrestrial vertebrates, especially birds.

He said this movement of animals, such as ducks, to different environments is called "habitat selection."

He reasoned that the construction on campus is one possible factor that affects the ducks'

habitat selection.

"Construction will only affect the ducks' habitat selection if it causes loud noise levels near the pond, which will cause them to move to another pond," Withey said.

Overpopulation might also affect the ducks' habitat selection. However, Withey explained that, because ducks are urban adapters, overpopulation has no impact on their choice of habitat.

Perhaps, the most vital factor in habitat selection for ducks is food, according to Withey.

"In general, ducks will probably be more abundant where there is more food, such as fish and vegetation," Withey said. "Ducks will also be attracted by food provided by people."

Human feeders are unaware that bread lacks nutrition for ducks, according to Melissa Mayntz, a birding blogger and a member of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Feeding bread to ducks can lead to malnutrition, overcrowding, pollution and diseases.

But students and faculty can feed ducks a variety of healthy foods for their appetite, such as wheat, oats, rice, grapes, milo and several other healthy choices, according to Mayntz.

Natalie Marquez, senior biology and criminal justice double major and president of the Pre-Vet Society, said ducks



PHOTO FROM WIKIPEDIA

Although the reason for their absence is unclear, the University's duck population might have moved due to construction noise, people feeding them, or even overpopulation.

need access to clean water, shelter from predators and bad weather, but most importantly, they need proper nutrition.

Marquez reasons that when the ducks' nutritious food sources at a pond are lacking, they will stay in the same pond as long as humans provide food for them.

"Ducks typically eat whatever you give them," Marquez said.

Marquez believes people should not feed ducks because it can cause a variety of health problems for them, including behavioral changes.

"Ducks are not domestic and need to stay wild," Marquez said.

When students and faculty feed animals, especially the ducks at the University, they should be aware that they are risking their

own safety.

"When hungry, [animals] will go as fast as they can to get the food. If they happen to bite because your finger was in the way, so be it," Marquez said. "As they become impatient, like children, they will try to get your attention for food."

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Turnovers a concern heading into homestand

RUBEN PALACIOS
Staff Writer

In every FIU women's basketball loss there is one constant: turnovers.

Through Nov. 28, the team is averaging 15.6 turnovers per game while only forcing opponents to 12 turnovers per game. Their negative turnover margin is second worst in the Sun

Belt Conference and is in large part, the reason they've lost their games.

In all three losses, FIU turned over the ball more times than their opponents, while in their two wins they have less turnovers.

"To beat quality teams, you have to concentrate all the way

through and minimize on your mistakes," Head Coach Cindy Russo said.

Senior shooting guard Carmen Miloglav leads the team with a whopping 23 turnovers, including 16 in a two-game span, both losses. In the team's two wins, she has only four turnovers.

Despite being the third-best team in the conference in total turnovers, FIU does not force their opponents to commit many turnovers.

The squad ranks dead last in the conference in steals. Through five games, they have only totaled 30 steals at a pace of six steals per game.

This deadly combination of high turnovers and low steals is one of the biggest reasons this

team has had a rocky start.

JERICA COLEY
IS KICKING INTO GEAR

Junior guard Jerica Coley recently garnered Sun Belt Player of the Week honors, an award voted upon by the all the head coaches in the conference. The award is Coley's first of the season and fifth of her career, which ties an FIU record.

Coley had an outstanding week helping her team to a 1-1 record in the 18th Annual FIU Thanksgiving Classic. FIU defeated Iowa in dramatic fashion; Coley broke out her "Supergirl" cape as she drove coast-to-coast for a buzzer beating layup that gave the Panthers a 66-65 victory. Coley swished through a season-high

31 points in the victory. She also corralled six rebounds, a team-high four assists, two steals and a block.

Coley is top three in the conference in blocks (15 total, 3 per game) and ranks third in both scoring and rebounding. The 5-foot-7-inch point guard is 18th in the nation in blocks.

Through 71 career games, Coley scored 1,391 points which ranks eighth all-time at FIU. The countdown is on as Coley needs just eight points to move into a tie for seventh place, and is only 115 points away from being within the top five.

SOUTH ALABAMA
SHOWDOWN

FIU will host conference foe

South Alabama on Dec. 1, at the U.S. Century Bank Arena.

Through Nov. 28, University of South Alabama has a 5-1 record, but their level of competition has been low. Their wins have come against opponents with a combined record of 8-19.

FIU will have to try and defend Mary Nixon who is averaging 19.3 points per game through Nov. 28. Nixon led the Jaguars in scoring in all but two of their games so far.

The Jaguars are, statistically, the best defensive team in the Sun Belt.

They are only giving up 51.2 points per game. The FIU defense, which ranks fifth in the conference, gives up 63.2 points per game.

-sports@fiusm.com

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Panthers to take on highest scoring player in Sun Belt



JONATHAN SEGAL/THE BEACON

The Panthers are currently second in the Sun Belt in steals, averaging just under 10 per game as of Nov. 28.

KEVIN CASTANEDA
Staff Writer

After a win against Coastal Carolina University last weekend, the FIU men's basketball team finally gave Richard Pitino his first win as a head coach.

The Panthers, 1-2 as of Nov. 28, are coming back home to the U.S. Century Bank Arena to open up Sun Belt Conference play this weekend against the South Alabama Jaguars (2-3) Dec. 1 at 7:30 p.m.

The Panthers' premiere shooter, Malik Smith, will have to out duel the Jaguars' guard Xavier Roberson, who has averaged 12.8 points per game so far this year. Smith is currently scoring almost 18 points a game, placing him second in the SBC. The Jaguars also have a star forward in Augustine Rubit who is averaging 20.8 points per game, No. 1 in the Sun Belt, and 8.8 rebounds per game, fourth in the Sun Belt.

University of South Alabama comes in riding a three game losing streak with losses coming against Tennessee State University, Monmouth University, and Georgia State University. Both teams are at the top of the Conference in points per game with FIU second, averaging 72.3, and South Alabama third, averaging 71.8.

In the game against Coastal Carolina, Pitino changed up his starting lineup. He went with Joey De La Rosa at the center position, adding more size to his line-up. The 6-foot-11-inch center can possibly slow the Jaguars' Roberson in the paint. Additionally, that would give FIU a bigger starting line-up than the Jaguars at almost every position.

Pitino expressed his sentiment about the new line-up in the win against the Chanticleers.

"Tymell Murphy responded great for us in the second half and Malik Smith has just been really solid for us this season. Joey De La Rosa gave us a lot too," Pitino said.

Despite FIU's high scoring ways so far this year, the Panthers have been giving up nearly 77 points to their opponents, which is the worst in the SBC.

After having improved their shot selection against the Chanticleers, shooting 53 percent from the field, the Panthers will now have to change gears and fix their defense. The Panthers will have to capitalize on their ability to steal and force the Jaguars to turn the ball over. This will be an easy task considering that Arkansas State averages only 17 turnovers a game, which is ninth in the conference. While the Panthers strong suit is forcing opponents to turn the ball over, the Jaguars' block the most shots in the conference, averaging 5.6 per game.

Pitino, who likes to rotate his bench players in-and-out, has not seen productivity from the Panthers' bench players as they average just 15 points off the bench.

If the Panthers plan to beat their first conference opponent, they will need to keep up their conference-best three-point field goal defense, allowing opponents just 23.3 percent from beyond the arc. Adding in the factor of size, they can potentially capitalize on rebounding as well.

However, it will be a struggle as FIU comes in with the worst offensive rebounding offense, averaging just 28.7 and South Alabama has one of the best rebounding defense, averaging 34.4 per game.

Additional Reporting by Brandon Wise

-sports@fiusm.com

SWIMMING

Panthers head on the road to Missouri for Invitational

OSCAR BALDIZON
Contributing Writer

It's been three weeks since the Panthers last entered the pool for a meet, a deserved break for a team battling a lot of illness and injury the first two months of the season. Many swimmers missed multiple practices and the coach hasn't gotten the chance to really see the team at full strength. After recovering and resting for a few weeks, many of the girls are looking to have breakout performances.

"The team is really coming around and ready to swim fast this weekend with the girls looking better than they have all season," Head Coach Randy Horner said.

This upcoming weekend will be the second most important meet of the season after only the Sun Belt Conference championship, which the team has focused on winning this year. The Mizzou Invite format of the meet will lead to many of the fastest times the girls have swum this season. After battling through the toughest part of the season last month the ladies are not pushed as hard in prac-

tice now to rest their bodies for optimal performance.

"We are really not concerned about team finish, it's all about coming in and swimming best times of the season and giving us a snapshot of where we are and where we need to be in three months," Horner said.

A welcomed recognition was awarded to the team just before thanksgiving break when the Mid-Major poll came out and collegeswimming.com ranked the Panthers 15th nationally. This is the first time the women's swim program has received so much national attention having never been ranked so high in its history.

"We look at it with perspective," Horner said. "It's a great indication of where we are overall as a program and as team, but you don't want to get caught up with numbers and rankings because it's all about training and being ready to go to swim as fast as possible."

The team didn't break into the mid-major poll at all last year but are continuing to prove they are a force to be reckoned with, nationally as well now.

"The ranking goes right

along with our focus to win a conference championship and make appearance at the NCAA's National competition at the end of the season," Horner said.

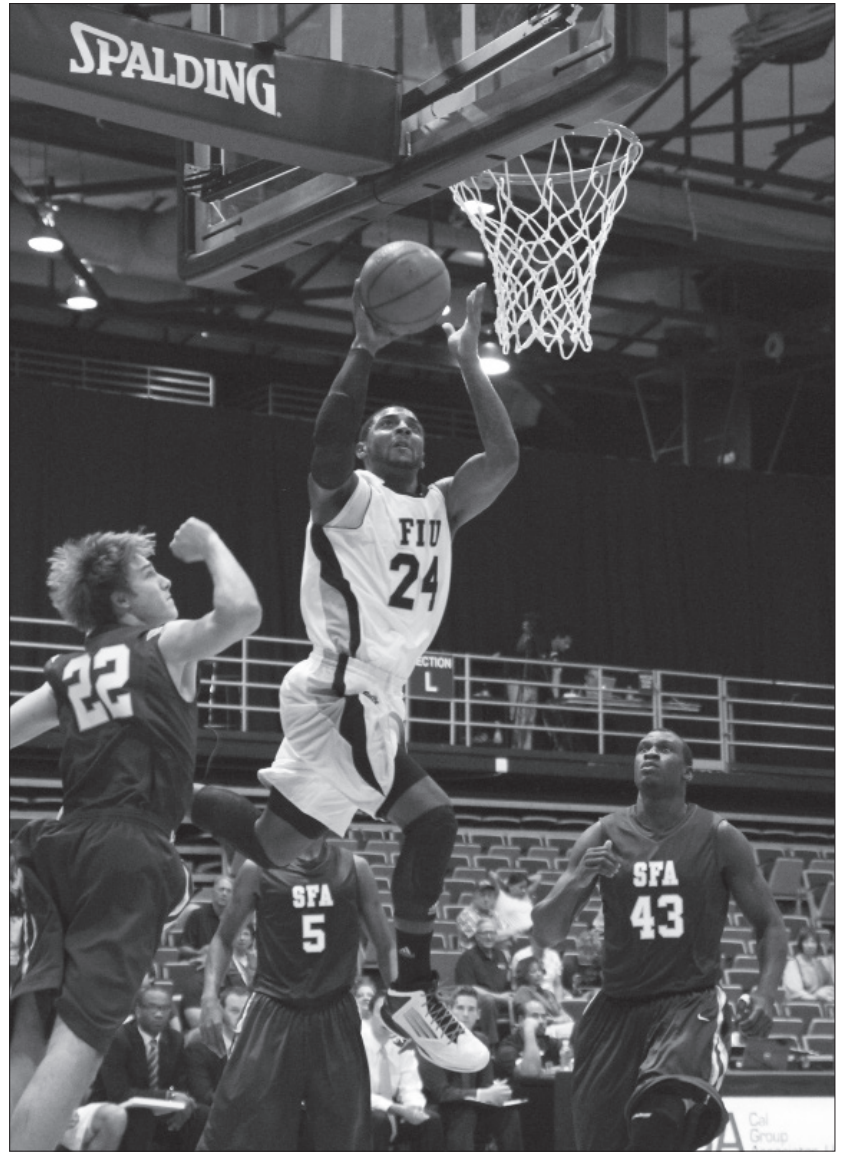
Some of that success can be attributed to some great international athletes being recruited to come to FIU. Three of the top swimmers on the team this year are from outside the United States in Sonia Perez-Arau of Spain, Marina Ribic of Switzerland, and Johanna Gustafsdottir of Iceland.

It's a great experience for the student to have the chance to learn a lot about different parts of the world and cultures they maybe wouldn't have gotten a chance to being on another team. This blending of international swimmers with Americans creates a great and diverse culture on the team, which in return helps the women be prepared for life after the pool and what they want to do.

The team looks rested and ready to compete this weekend, geared up to prove they are serious about their goals this season.

-sports@fiusm.com

PANTHER OF THE WEEK



JONATHAN SEGAL/THE BEACON

Malik Smith (middle) scored 21 points, including five three pointers. Smith also had four rebounds, two steals, and an assist in FIU's 87-77 win over Coastal Carolina.

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Registration struggles: the final stretch not so relaxing

CONSUELO NARANJO
Staff Writer

Unsuccessful advisement appointments, endless hold balances, unapproved financial aids and few parking tickets are just some of the impairments for more than 46,000 students trying to register for classes.

In 2011, the University's acceptance rate was 39.4 percent.

This year, with a higher acceptance, the University is offering more than 200 programs including undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs in more than 280 majors.

The University is expanding, but some students complain that there are not enough classes offered for their majors.

Carlos Escudero, a senior majoring in advertising, had to delay his graduation because he could not register for some classes that were prerequisites.

"I should be able to graduate in summer, however, some of my classes are just offered once a year and most of them are connected and are requisites to take other advanced courses," Escudero said. "It is frustrating staying in college while I feel ready to acquire experience and work in my professional field."

Mario Andres Naveda, who is studying advertising, is one of the 2,938 international students at the University.

Naveda has a scholarship, but still feels the struggles of paying an out-of-state tuition.

"As an international student I have to take a minimum of 12 credits, just one online class and I have to pay a high costly tuition," Nevada said. "Also, as a requirement to register for classes, I am forced to obtain health insurance every semester."

Andrea Green, undergraduate psychology advisor, said there are not enough classes to supply students' needs,

but many students don't know that there is a time and a day to register depending on their year and major.

"FIU's student population is growing, so classes get filled quickly, for that reason students must be aware of registration day," Green said.

Green said it's important for students to meet with their advisors.

"Students need to make appointments with their advisors to identify any problem and to follow their Panther Degree Audit," Green said.

President Mark B. Rosenberg, in his fall 2012 update release, wrote about the importance of seeing an advisor and the use of new online tools before registering.

"Our students are now using Major Maps and e-advisors for semester by semester tracking and feedback on progress to a degree," Rosenberg wrote. "Twelve additional advisors were hired for this new academic year."

Students are able to access their Panther Degree Audit and set up an appointment with their advisors online at my.fiu.edu.

Gilberto Campa, a junior majoring in international relations, is thankful for this new tool.

"Online access was fast and easy to use I set up an appointment with my advisor online and he helped me on my search classes as well as necessary requirements for graduation."

Students can check any holds on academic, administrative, financial or health, which will prevent them from registering for current and future semesters. Some financial or disciplinary holds would not allow students to receive their graduation diploma or certificates.

Sandeep Varry, coordinator of computer applications and external programs considers Major Maps, myfiu and e-advisors one of the most helpful tools.

JEWISH VOTE MATTERS



SANA ULLAH/THE BEACON

Samuel G. Freedman, religious columnist for The New York Times, spoke to journalism students on Wednesday, Nov. 28. Freedman is a professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the author of "Letters to a Young Journalist" and five other books. Freedman spoke about the role of the Jewish vote in the 2012 presidential election as part of School of Journalism and Mass Communication Hearst Distinguished Lecture Series.

"Students are notified by e-mail as well as by their FIU account of any hold or restriction for registration," Varry said. "Immediate action from the student is necessary to remove any impediment that will affect a successful registration."

-consuelo.naranjo@fiusm.com

Sinning in college may not be so heaven and hell

MORGAN GARCES
Contributing Writer

College is a strange place to worry about sin.

Mary Lou Pfeiffer, Honors College fellow, who teaches a course titled The Seven Deadly Sins, chooses Mahatma Gandhi's definition of sin: "Wealth and greed without consciousness."

The Seven Deadly Sins, an Honors course, explains the seven sins: anger, gluttony, envy, greed, lust, pride and sloth.

Sinning expands into multiple religions.

Austin Avidan, a junior majoring in English, is Jewish and said in his religion a person can be forgiven for sinning.

"I know a Hasidic Jew who does a lot of scummy things, like a con man, but he goes to temple all the time," said Avidan. "The Jewish religion says you can be forgiven for your sins as long as you go to temple."

Judaism states that violating the divine commandments to be

a sin. Something as common as a tattoo is prohibited in the Torah.

But looking around, it is easier to spot a tattoo than a kippah, a cross necklace or a hijab.

"I think the way we think about religion has changed because it has been so pushed in our faces, 'You have to think of something this way' so we kind of pull back. I want to believe in a God because I want to, not because you say I have to," said Avidan.

In college, many students begin experimenting with many "condemnable" acts such as trying drugs and exploring their sexuality.

Mina Ghorbani, a junior dietetics and nutrition major and Shia Muslim, does not believe that this is a sin.

"I believe in God, I even pray 5 times a day and fast. Am I thinking about Him every time I take a drink? I am not doing something wrong to other people," she said. "I use foul language, not pray on time, on occasion drink.

I am not covered in proper attire. Goes on and on. I do pray and ask for forgiveness, and that is what Ramadan is for, to have a clean slate and ask for forgiveness."

Ghorbani said sinning can change from culture to culture and generation to generation.

"When I wear skirts [my father] says it's a sin and I just keep moving," said Ghorbani.

Jamprrie Depusor, a sophomore majoring in civil engineering, said that according to the Bible, the breaking of the 10 commandments is a sin.

Stealing is listed as a sin according to the eighth commandment, so if a person logs in a neighbor's wi-fi without permission they would be committing a sin.

Ethan Williams, a junior studying English, practices Daoism, which is a popular religion in China which focuses on natural order.

"I believe that the idea of sin came from the notion of karma. I don't believe in sin, I believe

more in cause and effect, or reaction. If you act and feel good then you will relive those back," said Williams. "But if you focus on the negative and have those evil emotions, you will attract those feelings as well."

Daoism follows the idea that a person will get out of sync with nature if he or she does bad things.

"If someone cuts you off and then you're pissed off the whole day, you're letting out that angry energy. Then, things like that are going to keep happening because you're giving that out," said Williams.

Ned Chandler, a junior studying fine arts doesn't believe in sin. He identifies more so with atheist ideology.

"I personally believe that sins are made up; there are no punishments unless you believe in it, then it's guilt and a fear of going to 'hell.' Sin is a rule made by the church to control people's morals and behaviors."

He said that some things that

people do on a daily basis would be consider a sin in the past.

"There's lying, premarital sex, stealing, not respecting your parents, wearing mixed material, and planting crops in the same field," Chandler said.

Depusori admits to feeling guilty after sinning, but there are rarely any serious effects.

"Before, stealing may have been a goat and now it may be someone's wife. They progress as we progress, basically," said Depusori.

Avidan believes humans are using religion for their own selfishness.

"I think they're not thinking about God so much and that after [sinning] they're like, 'I screwed up, let me go to temple so I can be forgiven,'" Avidan said. "I think that religion has turned into this selfish thing, just to make yourself feel better. I feel that religion should be a reason for family to get together and talk."

-bbc@fiusm.com