

## University students aid U.S. Dept. of State through research

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Students at the University are engaging in research that helps the United States Department of State draft policies.

The research is conducted through the Diplomacy Lab, a project created under the collaboration of the University's Latin American and Caribbean Center, the Applied Research Center and the U.S. State Department.

According to José Miguel Cruz, visiting assistant professor of politics and supervisor of the Diplomacy Lab, the program started in the spring semester of 2014 and serves as an opportunity for students to conduct research on topics that are of interest to the U.S. Department of State in developing activities and proposing policies.

Cruz's duties involve supervising the student researchers as they undertake their semester-long research project. The group is comprised of both undergraduate and graduate students who may have knowledge on the research topic in question as a result of their academic interests.

He admits that the Lab takes an interdisciplinary approach when

selecting candidates, looking for students in a variety of academic disciplines who may provide diverse pieces of knowledge.

Since the program is fairly new to the University, faculty members of the LACC identify students who they consider to be outstanding examples of people who can contribute to the research efforts of the Diplomacy Lab.

Working with the Lab provides its student researchers an opportunity for them to be involved in an effort that opens doors for interaction with officials from the U.S. Department of State.

These interactions take the form of phone calls and video conferences between the officials and students, through which they discuss the progress of their project.

The papers that the student researchers compile may range from 15 to 60 pages.

According to Cruz, the University is one of only three institutions of higher learning in the country that are partnering with the Department of State for these research efforts.

The other two institutions are the College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia.

Students shared their thoughts. "This program is the sort of thing

### JUST KEEP CYCLIN'



DIEGO SALDAÑA-ROJAS/THE BEACON

Derek Barcelo (left), an international business junior, exercises on a small stationary bike collecting money for his fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi.

that I feel more students should know about, especially considering that many people here are interested in what's going on around the world," said Jasmine Rodriguez, a senior history major.

Cruz stated that this partnership benefits the University to the extent that it allows students to have direct interaction with issues on an international scope and provides students a chance to understand how our globalized country functions and interacts with other nations and cultures.

While the Department of State

provides the LACC with a list of research topics, the members of the department are in charge of deciding the topic for the semester.

The first semester of the program saw the examination of issues dealing with prisons in Latin America, and the second semester covered the issue of gender-based violence in the Caribbean.

This year the topic deals with judiciary reform in Latin America.

In choosing the topics, the directors of the Diplomacy Lab take into consideration the capabilities of the University's faculty and its

ability to contribute its expertise on the research topic.

Taking into consideration the security and governance program it offers, the LACC chose this year's topic in order to further understand a related issue.

Usually, the research involves literature reviews of online and print sources. Rarely do the student researchers rely on interviews.

"Because of the diversity of our faculty and our students [this] opens a lot of opportunities to get deeper on the issues that are in the interests of the State Department," Cruz said.

## FIU Sea Level Rise Student Project to be aired on WPBT

**MARIA C. SERRANO**  
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Spearheaded by University students, a project on sea level rise will soon be broadcasted on television.

The project, titled, "Eyes on the Rise," was completed by students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and will be broadcasted by WPBT and YouTube.

Work on the sea level rise project started when the documentary "South Florida's Rising Seas," produced by University journalism professors Katherine MacMillin and Juliet Pinto, aired on WPBT in January 2014.

After the program aired, MacMillin and Pinto worked on the project with two other University professors, Susan Jacobson and Ted Gutsche Jr., to apply for the "2014-2015 Challenge Fund for Innovation in Journalism Education" micro-grant.

The professors were awarded \$35,000 from the micro-grant and the University became one of thirteen colleges to have obtained the grant.

Among the organizations that provide the funding for the grant are the Online News Association, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the Excellence

and Ethics in Journalism Foundation and the Rita Allen Foundation and the Democracy Fund.

“

I am concerned with sea level rise. I live in an area of Kendall that is prone to flooding.

Luis Castro  
Senior  
Journalism

”

"We created a project titled eyesontherise.org and we set out to create new curricula for the SJMC that would become the beginning of new classes on how to communicate sea level rise," MacMillin said. "Since my background is in television production I thought we should try to collaborate with WPBT."

On the project, the professors allowed groups of students to select and work on a sub-topic of sea level rise to document it using science-based journalism in multimedia platforms.

"During my drive to FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus, I saw some street flooding in North Miami Beach Boulevard and

stopped to take pictures and uploaded them to the website of the project," said Luis Castro, a senior majoring in

journalism.

In MacMillin's discussion with WPBT's representatives, if the product from the students came out well, WPBT could upload it to the station's YouTube site.

"Many of the students did not know before how to edit or shoot. [The students] took it on with such professionalism and such enthusiasm," MacMillin said.

After parts of the students' pieces were done, the material was shown to Max Duke, vice president of content for WPBT.

After the meeting, the idea was to create a YouTube video with each of the pieces shown to him.

The YouTube series will be uploaded by the middle of November and the half-hour program will air at the end of April.

"Many of us feel the responsibility to help educate our public and the students. By educating the students we are having them educate their families and communities about the impact of sea level rise," MacMillin said.

In addition, Duke suggested that MacMillin do a half-hour program in primetime at the end of April with the best pieces.

Students offered their opinions, citing that projects like these provide real-world experience.

"I think that any work at school is encouraging because it gives you experience to apply in the many aspects outside of school," said Angela Abdala, a senior journalism and marketing major.

By airing the product of the effort of the students, WPBT creates awareness for other students who are not aware of the consequences of sea level rise.

"As for now, I am not concerned at all about sea level rise because I am not aware of the situation as much as I should," Abdala said.

Others, on the other hand, are worried about the issue.

"I am concerned with sea level rise," Castro said. "I live in an area of Kendall that is prone to flooding."

The YouTube series will be uploaded by the middle of November and the half-hour program will air at the end of April.

"Many of us feel the responsibility to help educate our public and the students. By educating the students we are having them educate their families and communities about the impact of sea level rise," MacMillin said.

# NATION & WORLD BRIEFS

## Ukraine crisis dominates security conference with Western powers, Russia

Serious tension consumed an international security conference Saturday as the United States and its allies traded blame with Russia for the fighting in eastern Ukraine, fueling uncertainty about a new diplomatic effort by France and Germany to end the worst violence in five months.

The differences were underlined

in terse speeches and a burst of derisively undiplomatic laughter that greeted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's claim that Russia's annexation of Crimea last year followed a legitimate vote--held under the guns of thousands of Russian troops and unrecognized internationally--for self-determination.

## Parents of American hostage seek private contact with Islamic State

Islamic State extremists said Friday that Jordanian warplanes operating as part of the U.S.-led coalition attacking militant targets had killed an American female hostage, an assertion greeted with deep skepticism in Washington and Amman.

In a statement posted on a Twitter account, the radical group said the Jordanian bombardment hit a compound where the hostage,

Kayla Mueller, 26, a humanitarian worker, was being held near the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, an Islamic State stronghold.

"The crusader criminal air force struck a site outside of Raqqa city today at noon during Friday prayers, and the strikes lasted for one hour," said the Islamic State message. "And we have confirmed the death of the American hostage by the bombs that fell on the site."

## Yemen rebels assume control in Sanaa; US resumes drone strikes

Amid deepening political turmoil here, the United States has resumed drone strikes against al-Qaida's most feared franchise without seeking approval from the Shiite Muslim rebels who have tightened their control of a government once considered a close American ally.

The insurgents, known as Houthis, dissolved Yemen's parliament Friday and announced plans to set up interim bodies to

run the government, a move that opponents said amounted to a coup. The capital was calm but tense as armed men loyal to the movement quickly filled the streets.

Yemen has been roiled by uncertainty since the Houthis seized the presidential palace and put U.S.-backed President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi under house arrest on Jan. 22, leading him and his Cabinet to tender their resignations.

# HBO Go service offered to students living on campus

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University students who live on campus now have another entertainment option to take advantage of.

All housing students now have free access to HBO GO, according to an email sent to all students living in on-campus housing on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

The discussion to make the service readily available to students took place at the National Association of College Auxiliaries conference in the fall, when Joe Paulick, director of Housing, approached HBO representatives and asked if there were any new service developments that were being offered for students.

Following the conference and update on HBO GO being offered in other college and university campuses around the United States, it took around five months to make the service available to the University.

During this time, authentication of the program took place and practice runs were conducted to check the connection on campus.

According to Paulick,

who joined the Housing department in October of last fall, students living on campus have had access to HBO for around five years, with the chance to see about four or five of the network's channels, as they are the only ones currently offered by the Housing department to its students for free.

As Paulick described it, HBO GO offers users the chance to have access to films, shows and documentaries featured by the network.

Housing students can access the service directly from their computers, iPhones, Androids, Apple TV, and even gaming devices, such as Xbox.

Those using their computer, iPad, or Android device can even have access to the HBO GO service off-campus.

Paulick admitted that he actively looks to expand opportunities for students at the University, and providing HBO GO for free is a way of doing this.

He also admitted that despite the fact that the Housing department doesn't always receive positive emails from students, the offering of this new service has created an opportunity

to receive emails on a more positive note, explaining that students have thanked the department for the additional entertainment option.

Some students shared their thoughts.

"It's always cool to have new ways of entertaining yourself," said Hannah Torres, a sophomore communication arts major. "The University has a lot of fun resources for people to stay active, but it never hurts to just relax in bed and watch television."

According to Paulick, the new service is an addition to the already large variety of options that students have to remain entertained, such as Netflix, Spotify and iTunes Radio.

He also reiterated the fact that this new service is free to housing students and that the prices of the University's housing options have not increased as a result of its offering.

He hopes to add more entertainment options to students living on campus, such as High Definition services for sports channels and news networks, a service that he admits several students have requested in the past.

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

*A message from FIU Housing:  
Just a reminder that Fall 2015  
Housing Agreements are due by  
Saturday, February 14th, if you  
want to participate in Room  
Selection.*

SCREENSHOT COURTESY OF RHYS WILLIAMS

Along with receiving notice from the FIU Housing office about their access to the HBO Go services, students who currently live in housing got text messages warning them that the last day to turn in housing agreements will be Saturday, Feb. 14.

## SJMC hosts international event

### MEDIA PARTY, PAGE 8

coming from Latin America, even in terms of using databases and using information to give more access to people and more access to information," Reis said. "I really want the students to be a part of that, not only the journalism and mass communication students, but all students."

The first day of the event will be held Friday, Feb. 13 at the Kovens Center on the Biscayne Bay Campus from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. There will be talks, workshops and networking with the media leaders.

The next day, Saturday, Feb. 14, is expected to be a more hands-on day at Lab Miami in the Wynwood Arts District. There will be experts on new media technologies and tools for learning and

skill-sharing sessions. It will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Maholi Hernandez, a junior public relations major, thinks that this event will be an opportunity for all students to learn about the importance of social media and journalism today.

She also said that Miami is the right city to host the event since it is the hub of Latin Americans.

"We are more connected to each other, not only here but also in Latin America, Europe, Asia," said Hernandez. "[Technology] is getting better everyday and helping to communicate even better what is happening right now."

Tickets for the general public are \$45 and \$20 for University students. Registration is available at <http://www.mediapartymiami.com>.

# THE BEACON

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## Visual art to be enjoyed by the visually impaired

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Although museums can be places that some people struggle to go, they pretend, through different ways of creativity, to promote the message that everybody has the right to approach art. But, do we all have the same accessibility to art?

Have you ever wondered what happens when a visually impaired person wants to visit a museum? How would the experience be for them? Do

museums provide supply for this kind of demand?

Well, in their new project, the Prado Museum of Art in Madrid has broken the limits of visual art by implementing, through Didú technology, a way to admire this same art in a sensory way.

The Museum has opened an exhibition called “Hoy toca el Prado” (Touch the Prado today), where the religious painting, the mythology, the genre painting, the portrait and the still life are the genres reproduced on versions of relief with

textures and volumes of up to six millimeters, that through touch are accessible for the first time to visually impaired people.

Velázquez’ “La Fragua de Vulcano,” Goya’s “El quitasol,” da Vinci’s “La Gioconda” and Greco’s “El Caballero de la Mano en el Pecho” are some of the paintings included on the exposition.

The museum also offers dark sight-impeding glasses to those who have normal vision in order for them to live the experience.

The project, which has been developed in collaboration with professionals in visual disability, also includes braille panels, information boards and audio support guides complimenting the tactile exploration of the paintings.

Since going to a museum is an activity of just a few, I believe this is an initiative worthy of recognition. This is what art is all about: creating; and in its different ways of expression, it should be accessible for every kind of public.

## The most offensive word of the 90’s

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We live in a society that the concept of individualism has been pushed so much that it’s become mainstream to be an individual. So much so, that conformity is an out of the box concept.

We no longer tell you how to dress or how to act (or so you think). We let you be “you” and not care what others have to say about it.

We as a society value the “I” in Individuality so much so that it has become the common but this norm is only superficial. You can be as much of an “individual” as you like, but do you feel like you’re really an individual?

In the 1990’s one of the most verbally limiting and degrading terms came out and has shaped the way we articulate our thoughts

--Political Correctness.

Being politically correct (Or PC) is the new way of mental conformity that has swept the nation. We pick at every sentence fragment before we spit it out or slap them on paper.

So where is the sense of individualism if we have to measure our words? Lets not confuse being PC with having a filter, there is a big difference in speaking your mind and dropping an F-Bomb at free will, there is a time and a place for everything.

But the concept of political correctness has been inflated so much due to people that can’t take criticism, that we have to filter the way we address issues in a public/professional domain.

We have to tailor every word we speak to not offend a person that might be sensitive to the subject that we are speaking of that our vernacular has become

unnatural, artificial and robotic.

For example you can’t tell (enter someone’s name here) that their performance sucks in the workplace, when it’s evidently clear and everybody in that workplaces knows that said person doesn’t pick up their own slack.

You need to sugar coat a positive constructive criticism when in reality there’s nothing nice that could be said about said person’s performance.

So the message you’re trying to convey gets lost in translation due to you having to be politically correct, because the person you’re addressing can’t handle some straightforward criticism.

You as a professional adult should be able to speak your mind and tell a coworker what’s on your mind without having to rethink what you’re thinking to say, by that same token the recipient of the news should be damn mature

enough to take what is being put down like an adult and not be insulted by it.

Now let me reiterate, I’m not saying to go out and start dropping F-bombs and offending people just because. There is a fine line between slurs and speaking like a human being.

But the concept of political correctness has been abused and is adding a filter to our current common sense (which evidently doesn’t seem to be so common) filter. Its taken the human factor out of our day to day vernacular.

Soon we will have to adopt speaking in parables to not offend the people that are offended by the people that will be offended by the comment of the people that aren’t meant to be offended that might offend the offender. (If you got that, then you’re ahead of the game buddy boy....or girl. Whatever.)

## FRANK AND IRENE: I’m Busy



SAMUEL PRITCHARD-TORRES/THE BEACON

### THE BEACON | Editorial

#### A restroom of one’s own

There’s no denying that issues dealing with the LGBTQA community comprise some of the modern day’s top hot button topics. Of specific concern to some individuals are the issues within the realm of transgender rights.

After the publishing of a Miami Herald article announcing the University’s plans to turn a storage closet in the Graham Center into a single-stall gender neutral bathroom, reader responses ranged from enthusiasm to rage, expressing particular outrage at the idea of a restroom specifically for transgendered individuals.

Wherever one finds oneself along the reactionary continuum, it’s important to understand that these bathrooms are gender neutral, free to be used by anyone regardless of gender identity.

Like many social issues that dominate discussion forums throughout the country, the topic of gender neutral bathrooms may require people to step back from their personal prejudices and place themselves in the shoes of those who identify as transgender.

What we believe these bathrooms provide is not an unfair advantage to people who are transgender, but an opportunity for these individuals to feel comfortable using a bathroom that doesn’t require that they reveal the gender identity that they may hide from public scrutiny. Taking this into consideration, the University’s efforts to provide gender neutral bathrooms in the rec center, housing complexes, and GC are steps in the right direction to transform the University into a more inclusive environment for all.

However, when taking one step forward, some feel the need to take two steps back.

Frank Artilles, a Florida Representative proposed a bill titled HB 583 that seeks to demand that people use only restrooms and other facilities designated for the sex which they were assigned at birth.

While some may argue that making accommodations for transgender individuals creates opportunities for, say, a cisgender female (a woman whose gender identity matches the sex she was assigned at birth) to enter a men’s bathroom under the argument that she “feels like a man” on a given day, others believe that there are other options more effective than Artilles’ proposal.

Community and family bathrooms that already exist can be used as an example. In these there is usually one toilet, a sink, diaper changing table and an enormous amount of space to accommodate parents if they are traveling with children.

Trans-friendly bathrooms don’t have to be as big. They can be created as a single restroom featuring a toilet and a urinal, or a series of these in order to accommodate more people. When it comes to crime, there are people who already take advantage of others to commit sex crimes in public restrooms. One way to keep the public safe in general is to put cameras outside the restrooms to discourage any violent acts, a precaution that should be taken towards all individuals.

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Have something on your mind? Send your thoughts (400 words maximum) to opinion@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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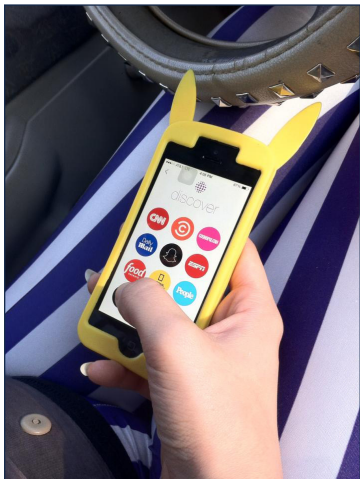
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## Snapchat's latest updates

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With the number of apps skyrocketing in the smartphone world today, Snapchat remains on the top for its photo-swapping madness.

However, with the newest inclusion of the "Discover" feature, that displays a collaboration of various



VANESSA MARTINEZ/THE BEACON

The new Discover update on Snapchat, released in late January, allows users to view snaps made by media companies like CNN, Vice and Comedy Central.

storytelling formats from world-class leaders of media around the globe, the experience for some users may not turn out to be the way they expected.

Unlike the majority of most popular and recent content seen on social media, the feature enables one to come to face with what is important within the stories.

It is supposed to be a form of engaging with the latest editions of flattering layouts, advertising and, of course, interesting selections of videos and photos.

Although these details may sound enticing, apparently that may not be the case for certain artists who would hope to accommodate to the changes made towards the creative community.

The addition to this multimedia craze has eliminated the "Best Friends" feature which shows the user which people they have interacted with the most.

This idea takes away from informing them other on who else they have sent snaps to.

This could mainly apply to significant others that are wary about their partners sending photos or video clips to people they are suspicious about.

It might just be a good thing

### SAFE IS SEXY



DIEGO SALDAÑA-ROJAS/THE BEACON

Dr. Sharon Simon of the University's College of Nursing and Health Sciences explains to students the dangers of sexual activity while under the influence of alcohol and drugs at the Sex Carnival on Wednesday, Feb. 4.

for those that want to remain mysterious while going crazy when it comes to communicating with a certain someone.

Natalie Pacheco, a current student majoring in Art at FIU, uses Snapchat every day. She says she could have done without the updates.

"I don't like that new Discovery (sic) news channel. It really slows down the app, and it kills your battery like crazy," Pacheco said.

While frowning upon the new channels on Snapchat, Pacheco

mentions her fondness of one of the recent additions in the app.

Snapchat has included Geo-filters which come with a variety of overlays that can be accessed when the user is in a certain location.

For example, students located at the MMC campus while accessing the app would see one saying "Welcome to Westchester" with the Miami-Dade County Community label at the bottom of it.

Snapchat can now become a more personalized experience,

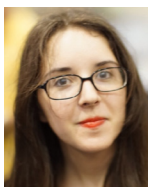
but with that it has also become a more open one, thanks to the new stories added to the app last year.

Some stories famously known are Miami's YesJulz [@YesJulz], with over 30,000 views per day, according to the 305.com and Jared Leto [@JaredLeto] for his decorative self-portraits.

Fun snapchats can make up for some who may not be too pleased with the Discover channel features, but even before the update happened Snapchat remains an addictive less-than-10 second-escape from reality.

## Homophobia in Hispanic culture

### PRIDE GUIDE



MADARI PENDAS

Growing up in Miami, it was always obvious that within the Hispanic culture there was homophobia. Whether it presented itself in the form of machismo - an intense obligation to "manhood" - or from the quotidian slurs used to disparage gays and lesbians.

When asked to give an example of when she's witnessed homophobia in the Hispanic culture, Delsina Trigoura, a junior and environmental science major, said "The typical machista telling his son that he needs to be a 'man'... Or my own mom telling me 'you like woman, (she points at the dog bowl) and tells me to get to feeding my dogs' (sic) because those will be the only children I will have and should have because a child does not deserve two women raising him/her. Also, I know friends who have been kicked out of their home for their sexuality preferences. I have three that have been

[kicked out]."

But where does this homophobia come from? Is it just a vestige of an older mindset, or is it firmly intertwined with the Hispanic milieu?

"I think that religion plays a huge role in it, due to most people [homophobic Hispanics] using the bible to defend themselves. Most Hispanics are catholic or Christian, so they tend to not be as open-minded about different sexualities and ways of life," Nadine Mendoza\* said, a junior and music journalism major.

Religion is, and has been, an important aspect of daily life for most Latinos. I grew up with several copies of the Bible in my home; and in my grandmother's house there were small shrines to different saints, like San Lazaro and La Virgen de Guadalupe. Religion, specifically Christianity, is an integral part of the culture.

According to a Pew research study conducted on Hispanics across the United States, their data said "nearly seven-in-ten [69 percent] immigrant Hispanics say religion is very important in

their lives, compared with half [49 percent] of U.S.-born Hispanics."

However, the religious indoctrination which is losing zeal with the younger generations makes the coming out process more difficult.

"When I attempted to come out to my parents, and before even mentioning being bisexual, they begun to call other gays insulting names, such as the f-word and dyke," said Mendoza.

Trigoura had a similar experience.

"At first my mom was not okay with it. She would tell my brother (who is gay) to pick me up to check out men. The first time she found out my brother was going on a date with another man she stood at the door with a knife and said she would stab him if he stepped out of the house (she didn't). She occasionally throws the 'may God bless you with a good man,' but I ignore the comment and we move on. I am still her daughter and she says it's just because she wants the best for me. She will eventually understand what makes my heart smile and will

come to terms with it."

The machismo and rigid female stereotypes also contribute to homophobia. Machismo prizes the masculine and castigates the effeminate, which can manifest itself in phrases like "boys don't cry," or "stop acting like a girl." And with women they can be discouraged from certain activities that are traditionally designated for boys.

But what can be done remedy homophobia?

"Accept. Accept that love is love," said Trigoura. "I wish

I could be attracted to men and make the process a lot easier for my family. It's not just something I decided I wanted to be. They need to understand that each person is fighting their own battle and an outsider's judgment is unnecessary."

"I think educating people is an important step. Most people are afraid of the unknown; some people don't even know what bisexual is," said Mendoza. "So, when you tell them you're bisexual, or homosexual, or demi-sexual, they just think it's weird and make fun of it.

Education and teaching is a key step in breaking down barriers."

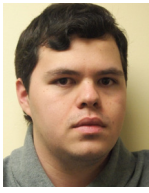
Through acceptance and education we can rid our community of these prejudices. And it's not one of those abstract goals whose results we won't witness in our lifetime, but something we are already beginning to witness within our generation and the way popular culture is beginning to have more representative LGBT characters in shows and films. It is possible.

\*Last name was changed.

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# Wachowski's overly ambitious in Jupiter Ascending

REEL TO REEL



RAFAEL ABREU

I love science-fiction. In film, in video games, in literature – it's my favorite genre.

Whether the story is extremely fantastical or extremely grounded, it's bound to interest me in some way.

I can forgive bad acting, bad effects and bad story so long as the film's sci-fi world, lore and tech keep me interested.

It took Lana and Andy Wachowski, the film's writers, producers and directors, a while to get "Jupiter Ascending" released, and their ambition, with a \$175 million movie budget, shows with flying colors.

The film stars Mila Kunis as Jupiter Jones, a long lost decedent of a royal Abrasax family, who is saved by Caine Wise (Channing Tatum), a genetically engineered former-soldier. Jones soon learns about her lineage and is taken on an intergalactic journey involving family, betrayal and, of all things, business.

"Jupiter Ascending" is a visual feast first and foremost--I have never said "cool" so much during a movie.

The effects in this film are nothing short of outstanding and fantastic to look at, though it may prove to be too much for some people.

I absolutely loved all scenes involving anti-gravity boots, make-up laden characters and space itself.

All of the settings in the film are unique and memorable one way or another, from a very urban "cesspool" and a cyberpunk-like refinery to a classic looking kingdom and completely white chapel.

Chicago, the Wachowskis' hometown,

is also well utilized, being the location of Jones' family and interplanetary battles.

During Wise's rescue of Jones, they go blasting through downtown, fighting off alien invaders and shooting around skyscrapers. It's an exhilarating sequence and one of the film's major highlights.

One of the most impressive aspects of "Jupiter Ascending" is the world building. During the course of the film, I found myself becoming more and more interested in the lore that the Wachowskis presented, especially since it was all their own creation.

All of it seemed fresh, different, unique and fleshed out.

“Most of the film's flaws come from its script, consisting of a story that is too convoluted and has maybe too much going on.”

We've never before come across these characters and worlds, though they definitely feel like they've been around.

The Wachowskis truly know how to create and firmly establish a universe that is both believable and enjoyable, such as their "Matrix" trilogy and recent film "Cloud Atlas." Jupiter Ascending is a film full of all kinds of details, small and large.

The characters are an interesting bunch, ranging from down-and-out (Sean Bean as Stinger Apini) to brooding-but-interesting

(Tatum), as well as ranging from subtle to over-the-top (Tuppence Middleton, Douglas Booth and Eddie Redmayne as Kalique, Titus and Balem Abrasax).

The Abrasax family is a noticeable one, since each sibling is unique and memorable, either for their personalities, environments or both, as their motives are very similar.

Kalique is a subtle person, introducing herself to Jones politely and explaining how certain things in their family's world works; Titus is a handsome playboy who further fleshes out their world for Jones - and was the one who hired Wise to find Jones - in the first place; and then there is Balem, who serves as the main villain and eldest Abrasax sibling, who's main goal is to kill Jones and claim complete control over the planet Earth.

Balem to me is such a fun and silly character, because he really is over-the-top: his voice is low and gruff and his mannerisms are effeminate. He's a good example of a laughably bad and cringe-worthy villain, but those precise criticisms are what for me made him such a great space opera antagonist.

For all the things "Jupiter Ascending" does so well, there is an equal amount of things it does, for lack of a nicer word, poorly.

Most of the film's flaws come from its script, consisting of a story that is too convoluted and has maybe too much going on in it.

It's never a good thing when I have to be tracking and re-capping the plot in my head as the film goes along, filling the story with more and more plot.

At least the overall story and themes were made clear to me by the film's end,

but among all that, it can get frustrating trying to understand what's going on and why.

It is unfortunate that the vision put forth by the Wachowskis came up short when put in motion. It's all there. The movie can be understood better with repeated viewings, but it should at least be easy to follow when viewed.

"Jupiter Ascending" has so much going on so much of the time that the film doesn't get the chance to explain every little thing.

However, and this may be wrong of me, I can forgive "Jupiter Ascending" and the Wachowskis.

I can forgive the convoluted plot, occasionally silly dialogue, incomprehensible moments and slight over-indulgence that the film features. Why? Because I love science-fiction.

If nothing else, I have major respect and admiration for the Wachowskis' vision and ambition.

Because "Jupiter Ascending" is still one of the most original films I've seen in years. It may not be perfect, its story might be flawed and the finished result may be unfavorable for many, but for me, it was exactly the kind of sci-fi tale I never get to see.

It was the kind of story that takes cues from fairy tales, the Wachowskis own interests and general fantasy to create a space opera the likes of which never get released, let alone imagined.

-rafael.abreu@fiusm.com

**Film:** Jupiter Ascending  
**Rating:** ★★★★★

## FIU students on the Grammys



"I was watching the walking dead."  
 Elsa Guevara, junior psychology major



"No offense, Rihanna 'da fuq' was that. I thought 'is she pregnant' I gave Sam Smith a standing ovation."  
 Curtis Litwiller, freshman hospitality management major



"I really liked Usher's performance. Usher inspires me as far as being a Haitian singer and being very successful and as a rising singer. Whatever you do never give up."  
 Richie Belair, senior criminal justice major



"Hans Zimmer and Pharrell, I thought was a crazy combination it was weird at first at first a little demonic but it turned out really well in the end. It was interesting to see an older artist with a newer artist."  
 Chris St. Prix, sophomore international relations major



"I liked Sam Smith Mary J. Blidge, John Legend and Common. I'm a fan of Beyonce and I was a little disappointed because she doesn't have a churchy gospel voice, she has a pop voice and needs to stick with that"  
 Zakiya Becca, senior communication arts and women's studies

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## ATHLETICS

# GOING, GOING, GONE?

## Alumni Association president calls for termination of Pete Garcia

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Some serious controversy is brewing behind the scenes of FIU athletics, as CollegeAD.org released a statement from the President of the FIU Alumni Association Frank Pena calling for the termination of Director of Sports and Entertainment Pete Garcia.

The main points Pena cites in his statement are FIU's recent struggles on the field/court, many players failing to meet academic standards, Garcia's inability to fundraise sufficiently and the lack of fan support FIU's athletic teams receive.

FIU has only won two conference championships since 2012, and neither were in large revenue sports.

The Panthers won the conference in women's soccer in the 2012 season and in 2013, they won a women's golf conference championship.

Pena was very proud of these championships, but in his eyes they're not enough to consider the University's athletic programs successful as a whole.

"Our football program has a combined record of 8 wins and 28 losses over the last three years," Pena said, "[including] two losses to Bethune-Cookman [University], an FCS school. Since the 2006-2007 season, our men's basketball team has only had one winning season."



JUNETTE REYES/THE BEACON

Executive director of sports and entertainment Pete Garcia has been under scrutiny given recent controversies.

Academics have been a glaring weakness for FIU athletics over the years. The 2013 football season was marred by players who were declared academically ineligible, and they ended up finishing the season 1-11.

This trend continued last year, when the men's basketball team were not allowed to participate in postseason play due to the team's low GPA.

"In both men's basketball and football, our academic progress rate is among the worst in Conference USA," Pena said. "Last year, FIU had just 19 Conference USA Academic Medalists [which was] fewest in the conference."

Pena also highlights the difficulties FIU has had fundraising for athletic programs in recent years.

"In 2012-2013, athletics was at 40 percent of its fundraising goal," Pena said, "which was last for all university units. One year later, athletics was at 48 percent of its goal and was still in the bottom quarter of all departments."

Finally, Pena touched on something anybody who has attended a Panthers sporting event recently can point to as a glaring weakness - the lack

of fan support. It's no secret that FIU doesn't have the fan support and attendance that most Division 1 athletic programs receive. Pena goes as far as calling their football attendance "embarrassing."

"This past football season, FIU ranked 127th out of 129 FBS teams with an average attendance of 11,966," Pena said. "The previous season our program was 120th with an average attendance of 15,453...[i]n fact, it can be safely said that local high schools draw higher attendance in their weekly games."

Garcia and his decisions as the director have been under fire numerous times over the years.

Some of the notable occasions were when he refused to grant the Miami Herald beat writer media credentials for the 2014 football home opener against Bethune-Cookman, and when he allegedly pulled thousands of dollars from women's athletic teams to fund January's Miss Universe pageant.

This is not the first time somebody has publicly aired their grievances over Garcia's job performance.

Over the years, many faithful FIU football fans have started chants, held up signs and worn shirts calling for Garcia to be terminated as the Director of Sports and Entertainment.

The university is yet to issue a public response to Pena's statement.

## SOFTBALL

# Softball team 'took a dominant lead' at Sand Dollar Classic

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The FIU softball team traveled to Gulf Shores, Alabama this past weekend to compete in the Sand Dollar Classic where they finished (4-2).

Junior ace Corrine Jenkins (4-0) pitched and dominated on the rubber for the Panthers to take down University of Houston (3-3) and Eastern Kentucky University (3-3) now in her 27th career complete game.

The first game against Houston was one to remember. Sophomore Stephanie Teixeira led FIU offense going 2-3 with four RBIs and a shot over left field for her first home run of the season.

FIU exploded in the second inning, scoring five runs off six hits. Freshman Ashley Belans hit a double to left-center and drove in two runs that gave FIU a 7-1 lead. The Panthers finished the game 8-1 with the first victory of the season.

The next day the Panthers took on the Lamar Cardinals (3-2).

Senior Shelby Graves struck out four and held the Cardinals hitless through four complete innings. The Panthers struggled offensively until Teixeira roped a triple to right center in the fourth inning to give FIU the upper hand.

The Lamar Cardinals then had four hits in the sixth including two HRs with no outs to tie the game at 3-3. This broke Graves streak of 19.1 scoreless innings.

Sophomore Ashley Leon came up in the seventh inning and beat out an infield single hit to short and moved junior Dominique Grossman, who reached on a fielder's choice to third.

The Auburn transfer tricked the Lamar catcher with a delay steal and beat the rundown that allowed the go-ahead run to score. The Panthers finished the game 4-3.

Later the same day, the FIU softball team fell to the McNeese State Cowgirls (3-2) as result of a pinch-hit home run in the bottom of the sixth.

Jenkins started the game for the Panthers and went 4.1 innings until Graves came in for 1.2 innings and got stuck with the loss.

Teixeira let out a two run homerun in her first at bat of the game giving FIU an initial 2-0 lead.

The McNeese State bats were on fire in the fifth inning and a pinch-hit two run homerun by McNeese State's Rachel Smith put the Cowgirls ahead 3-2 in the sixth inning.

On Saturday afternoon, the FIU softball team won 4-1 against the Eastern Kentucky Colonels (3-3).

Jenkins struck out a season high eight batters while Leon went 3-for-3 with two stolen bases.

The top of the batting order took control as senior Krystal Garcia pulled FIU ahead with her first home run of the season and Teixeira went 2-for-2 with two RBIs.

Afterwards, the Panthers took on No. 3 Alabama in a hard fought pitching duel for Shelby Graves, who pitched phenomenally throughout the first three innings keeping Alabama off the scoreboard.

The Panthers combined for seven hits against Alabama, the most allowed this season. Teixeira had a 2-RBI single in the bottom of the fifth for the only two runs scored against the Crimson Tide.

The Panthers finished 11-2 against No. 3 Alabama and wrapped up the Sand Dollar Classic the next day with a 7-0 win over the Houston Baptist Huskies.

Jenkins allowed no hits with four strikeouts that increased her total to 21. She has now lowered her ERA to 1.15. Sophomore Brianna Bartuccio made her debut in relief for Jenkins and went two scoreless innings.

FIU did very well offensively. Teixeira (2-for-2) and sophomore Gabby Spallone (1-for-3) led the Panthers offensively each with 2 RBIs while Garcia (1-for-3) and Graves (1-for-1), each had one RBI. Leon (2-for-3) got her fourth stolen base of the season.

The FIU softball team will open up its season at home on Friday, Feb. 13 as they host the FIU Invitational.

## BASKETBALL

# Men's basketball tries to get back on track as they travel to Southern Mississippi

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The men's basketball team (11-12) will travel to Hattiesburg, Mississippi to play the Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles (6-16) on Thursday, Feb. 12. Both teams will be looking to move on from botched comebacks in their last games and claim a win in a late-season Conference USA matchup.

The Panthers will likely look to senior guard Dennis Mavin to lead the scorers, a feat that he has done many times this season. Mavin is tied with T.J. Price from Western Kentucky University at 17.2 points per game for lead scorer in C-USA. Junior forward Adrian Diaz has also made an impact; he is averaging 13.5 points, 6.7 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game this season.

Junior forward Daviyon Draper has also come into his own lately for the Panthers. The Los Angeles native averaged 10.6 points over the Panthers' last seven contests, including a 21-point performance

in his team's last-minute loss to University of Texas at El Paso.

Southern Miss is led in scoring by guards Chip Armelin and Matt Bingaya, who average 15.3 and 14.1 points per game, respectively. Their team's average of 29.2 rebounds per game is one of the worst marks around the NCAA. The Golden Eagles lost a close game against the University of Alabama at Birmingham after they were outdueled at the free throw line.

Thursday's game should be a close matchup, according to C-USA's statistics. The Panthers' offense is eleventh best in the league with an average of 62.7 points per game, while Southern Miss has the eleventh best scoring defense, allowing opponents to score 69.0 per game.

The team's records say otherwise: the Golden Eagles are riding a four-game losing streak and are 1-10 against conference opponents, while the Panthers have been around .500 for most of the season and are 4-6 in C-USA.

Tip-off is scheduled for 9 p.m. ET from Reed Green Coliseum.



KRONO LESCANO/THE BEACON

Senior guard Dennis Mavin attempts a behind the back pass to senior guard/forward Kris Gulley. The panthers play Southern Mississippi on Thursday, Feb. 12.

## Womens basketball team looks to win first road game

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On Thursday at 6:00 P.M., FIU will take on The University of Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles (15-7). This is one of their four remaining home games, which the Panthers hope to steal couple of wins from, considering that two of their wins on the season have come at Lime Court at FIU Arena.

The women have lost 18 of 21 so far this season, and haven't won a single game away from their Miami home.

FIU will have to look to something more than just pictures of their old court to turn the tides if they hope to finish this last stretch of games on a positive note and try to gain something, if anything, in the department of momentum going into the CUSA Championships to be held at Birmingham, Alabama March 11th-14th.

The remaining schedule is all against Conference rivals, which is a toss up between a blessing and a curse. While it'll be great to see some of the same competition and prepare for what they're up against at the championships, it could just as easily mean 8 really tough games for a team that hasn't won a single game against Conference USA teams.

Picking up a win against Southern Miss won't be as easy as it sounds for the home team, as the Golden Eagles have



JINETTE GARCIA/THE BEACON

Junior guard Taylor Shade (left) signals for teammate senior forward/guard Zsafia Labady (right) to move up in the game against Old Dominion. The Panthers are currently 3-18 and play Southern Mississippi on Thursday, Feb. 12.

posted an even 5-5 record on the road, with three of the wins coming against conference opponents.

Florida International will have to look to rally behind the

veteran leadership of Marita Davydova, who is averaging a double double with 11.5 points per game, and 10.3 rebounds.

The Senior Center out of Moscow, Russia has over 200 rebounds just this season, and is looking to control and dominate the paint against Southern Miss.

She'll likely be matching up against Voche' Martin, from a place not quite as large as Russia, but might as well be, standing the same height as Davydova at 6 feet 3 inches, a senior from Desoto, Texas.

The competition Martin brings under the basket is how she is averaging 2.5 rebounds per game, and Davydova also takes on the job of stopping Martin from reaching her season average of 3.7 points per game, to give the Panthers a shot at the win.

The true test for the Panthers will come in stopping, or at least slowing down Senior Star Tamara Jones. She's averaging 14 points per game, and is liable to out-do her average at any moment. Hopeful to put score and outshine Jones, Kiandre'a "KP" Pound, and Taylor Shade come into this next game averaging 27.7 points between the two of them.

Davydova looks to be able to provide them a little extra assistance, and potentially send a couple of Tamara Jones's shots back-to-sender, at least one time Thursday night, per her season average.

## TENNIS

## Tennis team unable to hold lead against Yale



BRIAN TRUJILLO/THE BEACON

Sophomore Nina Nagode returns a ball against Stetson University on Jan. 30.

The Panthers lost against Yale University on Monday, Feb. 9, putting their overall performance at 2-3.

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The women's tennis team loss another close match this past Monday at the Cullman-Heyman Tennis Center in New Haven, Connecticut. They went up against a very competitive Yale team. The Yale Bulldogs are ranked 48th in the nation and with the win over the Panthers they move their record to 2-3. The match ultimately ended in a 4-2 decision.

From the way the match started it seemed like the Panthers can pull off an upset to remember by taking an early 1-0 lead. FIU took 2-of-3 matches in doubles play to keep the bulldogs from gaining any momentum.

In the doubles play, Yale won the first match as junior Kaitlin Brozovich and sophomore Valentina Briceno lost to Ree Ree Li and Valerie Shklover, 6-0.

FIU didn't let that intimidate them as they responded winning the next two matches as sophomore Nina Nagode and junior Carlotta Orlando defeated Hanna Yu and Courtney Amos, 6-3, and senior Yana Koroleva and freshman Nerma Caluk defeated Sherry Li and Carol Finke, 6-3.

After the doubles play, things got shaky and out of hand for the panthers. In singles action, the Bulldogs were able to tie up the match at 1-all, as Finke defeated Caluk, 6-2, 6-1. Yale didn't stop there as they took a 2-1 lead following a 6-1, 6-3 loss by Brozovich to Shklover. FIU was able to stop Yale

from taking the match in the next set. Orlando willed her way to tie up the match for the panthers. With the match at 2-2 it could have gone any way with no lead safe during the match. Unfortunately for FIU, Yale responded winning the next two singles matches as Caroline Lynch defeated Briceno, 6-0, 6-4, and S. Li defeated Nagode, 7-6, 6-3.

The final line was FIU losing and Yale took the contest 4-2. The Panthers put up an incredible fight against one of the better teams they will face this season. There are plenty of good things to look forward to this season. Their next match will be away at Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts to take on Boston College on Friday, Feb. 20. First serve is set for 5 p.m.

## SJMC hosts Media Party Miami

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This Valentine's Day, media innovators from all across the Americas will join forces at this year's Media Party Miami, a premiere showcase of digital media.

Hosted by the University's School of Journalism and Mass Communication and Hacks/Hackers Miami, the two-day event will feature panels on media innovation and hands-on learning with leaders in U.S. and Latin American media.

The event addresses how society is forced to compete and redefine innovation in software, increased access to data and new media models in the industry. Over 100 people are expected to attend.

According to the Dean of the SJMC, Paul Reis, it's important for students to be engaged in digital innovation; especially because of its significant presence in the media landscape.

"We want students not only

to know the latest technology, but also to be the ones who will come up with the new ideas and technology - that's what innovation is all about," Reis said, "Technology is changing, so it's a matter of also thinking in different ways."

According to the European Travel Digital Commission, Latin America corresponds to only 8.3 percent of worldwide internet users. However, tech-savvy countries like Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Chile show significant social media usage.

One of the panel speakers include Mariana Santos, a Knight International Journalism Fellow who has led teams of artists, developers and journalists to improve visual and interactive media storytelling in Latin America.

One of her projects was the creation of Chicas Poderosas, a phrase meaning "powerful women."

Founded in Costa Rica, the group aims to encourage women in Latin America to be involved

### GAME ON



MARCIA AKSU/THE BEACON

Rommel Altamirano, senior studying biology (right) and Cedrik Joseph (left), a freshman studying biology, play the Nintendo WiiU at the Gamers Unite event on Thursday, Feb. 5. Students could play video games and board games at the Glenn Hubert Library. The next Gamers Unite day will be March 5, 2015.

in technology and interactive design to address societal problems.

Trei Brundrett, Vice President of Product and Technology at Vox Media will also speak at the event. Through a platform

that he and his team created, they have delivered content and community with a readership of more than 150 million.

Brundrett has also developed projects for Fortune 500 companies, political campaigns

and clients such as Microsoft XBOX, Shell Oil, U.S. Senator John Kerry and Texas Monthly.

"A lot of great ideas are

**SEE MEDIA PARTY, PAGE 2**



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