

 <p>LIBYA</p> <p>Attacked Libyan woman held by Gadhafi</p> <p>Parents of a Libyan woman who claimed she was detained by Moammar Gadhafi's troops and gang raped said that she is being held hostage at the Libyan leader's compound in Tripoli.</p>	 <p>POLAND</p> <p>Poland wants detainees questioned</p> <p>Polish prosecutors investigating a secret CIA prison in Poland want the United States to question two Guantanamo Bay prisoners who allege they were held and abused at the site.</p>	 <p>YEMEN</p> <p>Blast at Yemen explosives factory kills 78</p> <p>A blast at a factory making explosives and weapons in southern Yemen killed at least 78 people after the facility was briefly taken over by Islamic militants and then looted by residents of the area.</p>
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Student seeks unified world through poses

ADRIANA RODRIGUEZ
Life! Editor

When thinking of ways to unify her world, Sara Conklin's mind kept returning to the theme of happiness.

Conklin, a 21-year-old FIU student, had been assigned the world unity task as a project in her high school English literature course. Her idea was to use a photo she took while vacationing with her family in New York City to create a template for the visual expression of happiness.

The pose was basic "and a bit goofy," she said, but since then, the activity in the picture has become known as "The Sara Pose."

It has become very popular on the web as people all over replicate her pose, which is, in fact, quite simple: the subject of the photo stands in front of any landmark, back turned to the camera and arms stretched out in the air as if rejoicing.

"Anybody, anywhere in the world who speaks any language can look at that picture and just see that the person is sublimely happy," Conklin said. "That person is so happy in that moment in time that they just want to freeze it. You don't even have to see their face or their smile to know it."

After the high school class assignment, the pose followed her through all her major high school events, including prom and graduation. The pose coined the name "The Sara Pose" after Conklin's friend picked up on her mission of uniting the world and wanted to share in the experience.

It all started with a Facebook album. Conklin created an album on the social media site chronicling her travels throughout her life where she got the chance to document the pose. The pose

wasn't just about a beautiful background to Conklin, it was about the significance of time and place. Friends would take a photo of them doing the pose and then tag Conklin's name. Conklin would then take the photo and add it to her own album.

"The pose is so much more than a pretty background," she said. "Wherever you take that picture, it doesn't have to be in front of Mt. Kilimanjaro. It doesn't have to be in front of the Eiffel Tower. It could be anywhere as long as it's meaningful to the person in the picture."

After high school, Conklin attended Boston University, where she studied directing in the university's fine arts program. As an elective, she enrolled in a course in African Studies, focusing on a country she always wanted to learn more about.

"Ever since I was a little kid I wanted to go to Africa. I don't know why," she said. "I grew up in a community that didn't teach me anything about Africa. It was just that one place I've always wanted to go to."

Conklin got her first chance to visit Africa on an internship when she was just a sophomore in college and the experience changed her, she said.

The internship was with an organization called Support for International Change that takes volunteers to Tanzania to live in rural villages to educate people on HIV/AIDS prevention and to run mobile testing centers. The trip also gave her the opportunity to give back.

"We knew Sara was set out to help and care for others from an early age," said Cheryl Conklin, Conklin's mother. She also wasn't surprised when Conklin decided to travel with the humanitarian group.

Conklin says she learned more from the

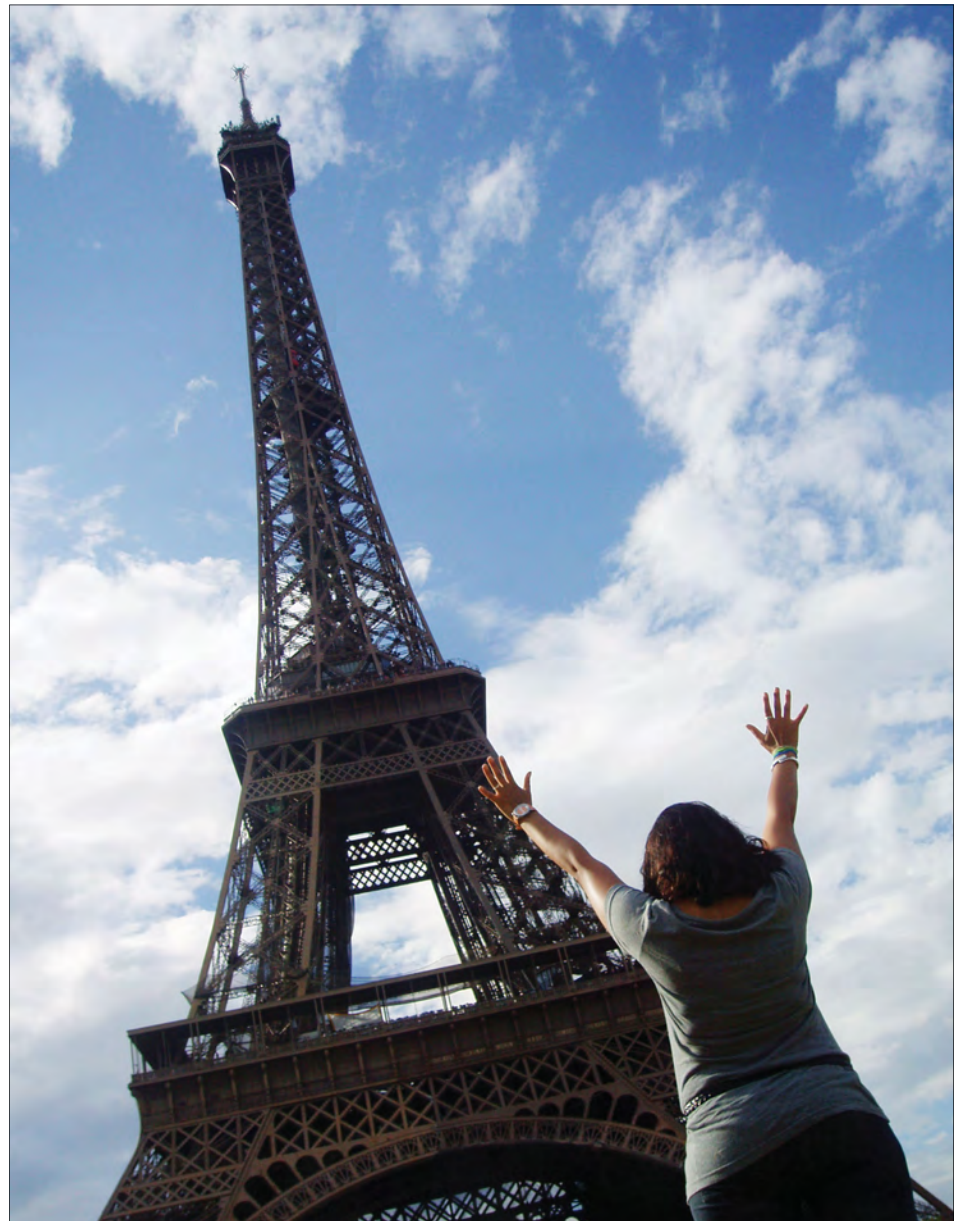


PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAPOSE.COM

Andrea Matamoros strikes the SaraPose in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. This photo won the SaraPose of the month for February on SaraPose.com.

villagers than she could have imagined teaching them. She even learned Swahili.

"We were living like real Tanzanians. It was what it was. I had to walk 10 minutes in the

morning to get my water and then boil it. I loved it," Conklin said.

POSING, page 5

Student demonstrates dedication, discipline in the ring

CHRISTINA FLORES
Contributing Writer

The arena erupted with cheers as the Brazilian-born super middle-weight boxer defeats his opponent in a unanimous decision at a crowded gym in Sao Paulo.

It was the 14th win for Michael

"The Brazilian Rocky" Oliveira, who has dubbed himself "The Chairman of the Board."

The 20-year-old physical therapy major at Florida International University has 11 knockouts and no losses.

His win last Friday night was against undefeated Abel Adriel of Argentina, earning Oliveira the

Interim WBC Latino super middle-weight title.

With a glove size of 10 ounces, Oliveira is a force in the ring. Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Oliveira's lifelong passion and desire is to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather in becoming a professional boxer.

"My grandpa was a boxer,"

Oliveira said. "He and I would sit on his couch and watch the videotaped matches he had been in. I became obsessed. I started to love the sport and started to see myself in the ring more and more."

His late grandfather, Joao Oliveira, was an amateur boxer in the military in Brazil.

Oliveira's brief amateur career began at the age of 17 and evolved into a profession within a year.

He attributes his success to his dedication and discipline. His daily workout routine consists of 6-hour days, including running, cardio, and

BOXING, page 2

Science Café course now offered by Biology Department

ANALIA FIESTAS
Staff Writer

Attempting to attract non-science majors to the world of science, the Biology Department will now be offering a Science Café course.

Headed by Ph.D. candidate Anya Goldina, this course is part of a new program within the Biology Department called "Quantifying Biology In the Classroom."

"The QBIC takes multiple fields, such as biology, chemistry, physics, English and

math, integrating them so that students can see how all these fields connect and have relevance to each other," said Goldina.

Goldina feels that science is becoming more specialized with certain scientific terms that utilize complex interpretations of published findings. Scientific findings that have strong impacts on governmental policies, such as healthcare and energy bills, are often too difficult to interpret by the public. These findings can easily be misinterpreted, and the University's Biology Department hopes that this new course can

ease this confusion.

"Science Cafés" have been implemented in many countries such as England, Scotland, United States, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, Japan, Zambia and the Philippines.

"Science Café aims to lessen the gap in the public's understanding of science and scientific research, and develop a culture of wanting to engage the non-scientist in talking about science with passion," said Goldina.

As part of the QBIC program at the

University, Dr. Ophelia Weeks and Dr. Martin Tracey, both professors in the Department of Biological Science, have developed a Science Café course.

"Dr. Ophelia Weeks was thinking of ways that she could challenge the science-major seniors to do something different and exciting with the material that they had been learning through their college career. This is how she came up with the Science Café idea," said Goldina.

SCIENCE, page 2

WEIRD NEWS

‘OMG,’ and ‘LOL’ added to the dictionary

It's difficult to avoid <3, OMG, and LOL slip into our text messages and emails, but at least we can now excuse that by pointing out that those are in fact terms acknowledged by the authorities of the English language.

The experts at Oxford Dictionaries Online explain that the initialisms added to the dictionary are “noteworthy” and even happen to be “found outside of electronic contexts.” How could they not add initialisms and words like this to the dictionary: la-la land, LOL, party-crashing, OMG, and wassup.

That's ‘wassup’ with this month's modifications of the Oxford English Dictionary. Let's hope that next month brings us definitions for OMGWTF, LMAO, and KIT.

Man dies trying to revive dead wife

A man who called 911 to report that his wife had collapsed apparently suffered a heart attack and died as he was trying to revive her, authorities say.

The Clallam County sheriff's office said when deputies and medics arrived eight minutes later on Wednesday night at the home near Joyce, they found the man slumped over her body. He apparently had been attempting CPR.

The deaths appear to be from natural causes and no crime is suspected, the Peninsula Daily News reported. Sgt. John Keegan called the incident strange but said no foul play is suspected. “Usually events like this don't happen in pairs,” the newspaper quoted him as saying.

– Compiled by Nicole Castro

CORRECTIONS

In Vol. 22, Issue 29, the caption for the picture on the front page titled “Through the Wire” incorrectly attributes the artist's work. The correct artist's name is Karen Rifas.

Also in the same issue, the event discussed in the Article “Week dedicated to graduate students,” called “Uprisings in the Arab World and U.S. Foreign Policy” is scheduled for Friday, April 1, not Wednesday, March 30.

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

Student boxer ranked tenth by USBA

BOXING, page 1

sparring at the Normandy Gym on Miami Beach under the direction of his Cuban American trainer, Roberto Quesada.

“Fighting is the easiest part of boxing; training and self discipline are the hardest,” Oliveira said.

Oliveira is the youngest boxer in the middleweight division and is No. 10 in the United States Boxing Association ratings. Twice (2009 and 2010), he's been recognized as the Brazilian International Press Award's Athlete of the Year.

Oliveira's success is expected in his family. He lives with his immediate family in Miami.

His father, Carlos Eduardo Oliveira, is currently his manager and number 1 fan, and both of his brothers, Nick, 19, and

Henrique, 16, are professional motorcycle racers.

His mother, Christina Degreas Oliveira, is the owner of a bathing suit company that has locations in Brazil, Greece and Italy. She is terrified of his profession and cries of fear during most of his fights.

Although his mother is fearful of injuries that may occur during his time in the ring, he says he has never been severely injured while on the job.

After he earns his degree from FIU, he hopes to open a combined boxing gym and physical therapy clinic in Miami and Brazil. He plans to box professionally for another five years.

Throughout his tenure at FIU, Oliveira has made many lifelong friends. Pablo Serp is Oliveira's ‘big brother’ in his fraternity and has quickly become one of

his closest friends.

“I went to Brazil in November to see his last fight and it was such an incredible experience. I was able to live the life of a boxer for a week while I trained with Mike and kept up the best I could,” Serp says.

“Everything he does, he does 100 percent. Mike believes in the phrase ‘go big or go home’ and that is something I, as all of our brothers, admire about Mike.”

Oliveira leaves his opponents with a warning:

“If you think you can beat me, then you need to wake up and apologize.”

Christina Flores, a senior journalism major, produced this story in the JOURNAL 3303 Advanced News Writing course taught by Dr. Fred Blevens.

Course to attract non-science majors

SCIENCE, page 1

As part of the courses, students create events geared at diverse, non-scientist audiences, to discuss various science topics in a fun, non-threatening manner.

“The course is new and it can still grow in many different ways. Right now we, students, are like guinea pigs. The persons in charge are trying a lot of different things with us to see what works best,” said senior and Biology major, Jasmin Qyyum.

During the first three years of the QBIC program, biology majors learn to read and interpret research articles, while discussing scientifically complex ideas using information learned in their science, math and lab courses. In their final year,

seniors practice communicating scientifically complex concepts in an engaging, easy-to-understand manner to non-scientists.

“Scientific texts are usually very difficult for a non-scientist to comprehend. Sometimes even professors or graduate students need to reread the information to be able to understand it. This is exactly why the Science Café is so beneficial to everyone,” said Goldina.

This year, for example, seniors from the Science Café course have already scheduled three meetings. The meetings are open to the public and the audiences can range from elementary children to college students.

Science Cafes, as emphasized by Goldina, are primarily student

organizations.

“The idea behind this class is for students to run it. The students decide what types of events they would like to hold, what topics they are interested in, and how they would like to obtain the public's attention. I'm technically just there to facilitate the process, and help them with whatever they need,” said Goldina.

Goldina has found the course to already be a success at the University.

“We are having a lot of fun. We're learning as we're going and it's not easy, but it is an amazing experience. As a teaching assistant, you picture things the way they should occur in the classroom, but sometimes things do not carry out the way you pictured them, and that is okay. We learn each and

every day,” said Goldina.

Not only are the creators and teaching assistants of this course content with the result, but so are the students.

“I really like the course because it gives us a chance to apply everything we have learned throughout our four years in school. It also teaches us how to communicate in a simple way with the public about scientific matters,” said senior and Biology major, Giselle Perez.

All those involved are hoping that the Science Cafes continue to successfully grow.

“This is their baby. This is what they're responsible for. Through these Science Cafes, they're living their own footprint on the world around them,” said Goldina.

Graduate Student Appreciation Week March 28 - April 1, 2011 @ MMC

EVENT AGENDA

Monday, 3/28

Scholarly Forum (posters and presentations); Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, Health and Medicine
Location: GC 243
Time: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Tuesday, 3/29

Scholarly Forum (posters and presentations); Social Science, Humanities, Law, Education
Location: GC Ballrooms
Time: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Wednesday, 3/30

Graduate Student Resource Fair
Location: Chapman Plaza
Time: 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Thursday, 3/31

Recognition Reception (Scholarly Forum and UGS Provost Awards – by invite only)
Location: College of Law Atrium
Time: 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Friday, 4/1

Global Awareness Session
Location: TBD
Time: 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm

GradSkellar @ Chili's Too, hosted by the Modern Languages GSO (MLGSO)
Location: Chili's Too
Time: 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Sponsored by: SGA, Graduate Student Funding Committee and the University Graduate School

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SOFTBALL

MOVING FORWARD

Rojas blast sparks FIU in win

MALCOLM SHIELDS
Staff Writer

After splitting the first two games in the weekend series against the Mean Green, the Golden Panthers jumped out to an early lead against North Texas and cruised to an 8-3 victory on March 27.

The Mean Green scored first in the bottom of the second inning. North Texas had runners on first and third with one out. Renae Bromley who reached base on a single stole second base. Short stop Kayla Burri allowed the runner from third base to score on an error, which gave North Texas a 1-0 lead.

The Golden Panthers took the lead back in the top of the third inning. With two outs, Ashley McClain was hit by a pitch and was followed by sophomore Brie Rojas, who crushed a two-run home run to center field on the first pitch she saw to give the Golden Panthers a 2-1 lead.

The Golden Panthers (17-15, 5-1 SBC) continued the pressure in the third inning,

putting two more runners on with two outs. On a 0-2 pitch, Jessy Alfonso singled to right field scoring a run to extend the lead to 3-1. Beth Peller and McClain picked up RBI singles afterwards to push the lead to 5-1.

North Texas (14-17, 2-7 SBC) pitcher Brittany Simmons had a rough outing and after giving up a single to Burri in the fifth inning she was pulled. Simmons went four innings, surrendering seven hits and five earned runs and earned the loss.

Mallory Cantler entered the game to pitch and FIU's Jenny Welch doubled to right field and walked the next batter to load the bases.

After recording an out on a fielder's choice, Cantler was called for an illegal pitch, which allowed a run to score. A sac fly by Alex Casals to center field scored the second run in the inning for the Golden Panthers.

The Golden Panthers added another run in the sixth inning

SOFTBALL, page 4



REBECCA VILLAFANE/THE BEACON

Megan Horne [above] stands on first base during a Golden Panther home game.

Golden Panthers ready for FGCU

MALCOLM SHIELDS
Staff Writer

After completing a difficult road trip through Texas, the Golden Panthers (17-15, 5-1 SBC) will take a short trip across the state to Fort Myers, to take on the Florida Gulf Coast Eagles in a double-header on March 30.

SCOUTING FLORIDA GULF COAST

The Eagles enter the mid-week series versus the Golden Panthers with a 19-17 overall record and riding a four game winning streak. Florida Gulf Coast has played a difficult non-conference schedule. The Eagles have played against three top 25 teams; No. 5 Florida, No. 7 Arizona State and No. 18 Oklahoma State, losing all three games.

The Eagles are led offensively by Platt, Mariah Fernandez and Brittney Garabedian. Platt's .389 batting average and .656 slug-

ging percentage leads the Eagles. Fernandez leads the Eagles with 19 RBI. Garabedian leads the Eagles with 7 home runs.

In the circle, McDaniel anchors the pitching staff for coach David Deiros. McDaniel has an 8-8 record with a solid 1.73 ERA in 101.1 innings pitched this season. Her .233 opposing batting average leads the Eagles. Breaux and Sullivan round out the pitching staff for the Eagles. Sullivan is 3-3 with a 2.45 ERA. Breaux has a 6-5 record with a 3.61 ERA.

LAST MEETING

The Golden Panthers are 3-3 in the last six meetings against Florida Gulf Coast. Last season, FIU defeated the Eagles in two of the three games. The last time the Golden Panthers faced off against the Eagles in Fort Myers was in the 2009 season. The Eagles

FGCU, page 4

TENNIS

Long rest provides time to prepare for final stretch

BRANDON WISE
Staff Writer

The Golden Panthers women's tennis team, ranked No. 64 nationally, is coming off of a much-needed lay off. The team is now 9-5, having won eight matches in a row, beating up on all their conference foes.

The team has had twelve days to get back to the practice court and fine-tune their game. The players were excited for the time off, but are looking forward to getting back on the court.

"It was not even a break for us," Coach Melissa Applebaum Dall'au said. "It was a time to put in the hard work to make ourselves even better than we have been before."

That would be a scary thought, as the team is already on an eight-match win streak heading into the final stretch of the season. Most of the team's wins have come by a score of 7-0 or 6-1.

STEPPING UP

Players such as Liset Brito, ranked No. 81 in the nation, and Lisa Johnson have played key roles in the success of the team over the past few weeks. They have combined to win eleven of their last twelve singles matches.

Freshman Guilietta Boha has been able to hold her own. She has stepped up and won four of her last five matches this season.

"We worked on points and playing more matches for experience," said Lisa Johnson on how the team used their time off. "We got used to different patterns and where to hit certain shots."

The team has been preparing for their next opponents, the Florida Gulf Coast University Eagles, who are 9-6 on the season and have won five of their last six matches in pretty decisive fashion.

"Every team we play is always an opportunity for us," Coach Applebaum Dall'au said. "This is another opportunity for us to go out there and prove what we can

do at a high level."

Lisa Johnson added: "I feel confident with my team. We still have room for improvement, but were getting along great as a team right now."

IMPROVED FITNESS

A key focus of the team's break between matches was fitness. The team has gotten the chance to get more cardio work and an overall physical fitness level rose and Coach Applebaum was pleased with what she saw.

"We're constantly working on fitness. Getting even stronger and faster is a key to our success," Coach Applebaum said. "Getting more aggressive is what we have to do to keep winning."

Confidence will be a key for the rest of the season. If the team can keep playing at the level they are now, they believe the sky is the limit for the success they could have.

With the Sun Belt Conference tournament looming in the next few weeks, Coach Applebaum Dall'au still



KRISTI CAMARA/THE BEACON

Lisa Johnson [right] takes a break during a Golden Panther home meeting. Johnson has been instrumental in FIU's eight-game winning streak.

thinks the team needs some work before they are ready for it.

"We're not there," Coach

Applebaum Dall'au said. "If we keep the confidence up, then we were going to have the best shot we possibly can."

The team will host those Florida Gulf Coast University Eagles on Wednesday March 30 at 1 p.m.

BASEBALL

Bermudez knocks in game-winning run in extra innings

BRANDON WISE
Staff Writer

In a game that came down to the final at bat, the Golden Panthers took on the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers. The game had its ups and downs for both teams but in the end, Pablo Bermudez's tenth inning single was the difference as the Golden Panthers edged WKU 9-8.

The Panthers had their struggles early on, starting out down 5-0, but when in came to crunch time, the bats were nothing but clutch.

"That was a pretty wild one. When you're down to your last strike twice and you go base hit, that's a pretty good job," Coach Turtle Thomas said of his team's play Sunday. "They showed good resolve and good and good resiliency."

In the top of the third, the lead off man for the Hilltoppers, Casey Dykes, drew a walk. Following two consecutive line outs, Western Kentucky's Ivan Hartle tripled to center to bring home the first run of the game.

After surrendering the lead in the top of the inning, catcher Joel Capote led off with a double to center. But later on he would be caught trying to steal third.

After Kes Carter led off the inning with a single to center, Ryan Hutchinson then homered to deep center and extended the Hilltopper

lead to 3-0. Casey Dykes then followed up with another single. Chris Bullard then homered to dead center to make the lead 5-0.

With two outs in the fifth, the Golden Panthers drew two walks from Jabari Henry and Joel Capote. Then Pablo Bermudez came up with a single up the middle to bring in a run. Immediately following the Bermudez single, Jeremy Patton then singled to right field to bring in another run making the score 5-2 after five innings.

Leading off the bottom of the sixth, first baseman Rudy Flores came up and drilled a home run to right center field, making it 5-3.

In the seventh, the Hilltoppers managed to load the bases against the Golden Panthers. This forced a pitching change for the Panthers. Mason McVay came on to pick up a huge strike out to shut down the Hilltoppers to keep it a 5-3 game.

In the top of the eighth, Hartle drove a home run deep over the left field wall to make it a 6-3 ballgame. It was the first run that McVay has allowed all season long.

The FIU bats came to life in the bottom of the inning. Mike Martinez and TJ Shantz led off with back-to-back singles. Then Jose Behar homered to deep left to tie game at 6.

"That was the first time all year [Behar] hasn't hit 9th in the lineup.

I'm glad he hit in that spot today," Thomas said jokingly.

The game was extended into extra innings, where in the tenth, Garrett Wittels came on to pitch for the Golden Panthers. It was the first time all season that he had taken the mound.

"He's a good pitcher," Thomas said. "The only reason he isn't throwing is because he plays shortstop."

He worked himself into a jam though, loading the bases. Ryan Huck then singled into left and brought home a run. An error by David Vasquez then allowed another run to score to make it 8-6 in the tenth.

Down two runs heading into what would be the last inning, Pablo Bermudez knew he would have to come up big.

"I knew I was the sixth batter, so I knew that if we were going to win or tie the game, I would have to come up big," Bermudez said. "I was mentally prepared and ready to handle that situation."

In FIU's last chance at the plate, the lead off man, Vasquez, drew a walk. Behar then grounded to Dykes, but he could not come up with it. Yoandy Barroso then came up clutch. Down to his last strike, he singled up the middle to make it 8-7.

Bermudez then came up with possibly his biggest hit of the year, singling to right to bring home Behar



KRISTI CAMARA/THE BEACON

Yoandy Barroso [38] and Sergio Perez [1] look over the field during FIU's thrilling 9-8 victory over Western Kentucky on March 27.

and Barroso to win the game.

The Panthers (15-11, 2-4 SBC) picked up a much-needed win as salvage a win from this series with Western Kentucky (16-7, 5-1 SBC).

"This is our biggest win of the year," Coach Thomas said. "This was bigger than our win out at Texas A&M. This is the most proud of the team I have been all year long."

Eagles won both games of doubleheader last season

FGCU, page 3

won both games of a double-header.

Last year, Kayla Burri, Ashley McClain and Brie Rojas, had success offensively for the Golden Panthers against Florida Gulf Coast. Burri went 5-for-11 with four RBI in three games against the Eagles. McClain went 5-for-10, while Rojas went 4-for-11 against the

Eagles.

Pitcher Jenn Gniadek struggled against the Eagles. In her lone start she went 2.2 innings, giving up seven earned runs in the loss. McClain also saw time against the Eagles. She pitched two scoreless innings in her appearance.

Courtney Platt paced the Eagles at the plate last year against the Golden Panthers. Platt went 3-for-7 with three RBI against FIU. In the circle,

Kelci Breaux, Stephanie Sullivan, and Catherine McDaniel all made appearances against the Golden Panthers last year. Breaux faired well against FIU, pitching six innings while giving up only two earned runs in a victory.

IN A GROOVE

Burri extended her hit streak to 11 games by going 1-for-3 in the series finale against

North Texas. She is currently hitting .323 on the season. McClain continues to have a great season at the plate. She is hitting .430 with 5 home runs and 31 RBI.

Pitchers Mariah Dawson and Gniadek have been stingy against conference opponents early on. Gniadek has a 1.22 ERA and a 2-1 record, while Dawson has a 1.75 ERA and a 2-0 record in conference play.

FIU EARTH WEEK



April 4th - 9th

For more information, visit
GoGreen.FIU.edu or email GoGreen@fiu.edu

FIU Student Government Association
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



FIU FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Office of University Sustainability

Offensive power propels road win

SOFTBALL, page 3

when McClain collected her second RBI on the day on a sac fly that scored Peller, who went 3-for-5 in the game, from third base.

Down six runs, the Mean Green mounted one last push to tie the game in the bottom of the seventh inning.

Lesley Hirsch led off the inning by hitting a double to right center field.

But after a walk to Cantler, the Golden Panthers recorded the first out of the inning on a

fielder's choice at third base.

Lisa Johnson loaded the bases on a single to center. A groundball to Burri completed the force out at second base, allowing a run to score from third base.

The game ended on a flyout by Courtney Bradshaw.

Jenn Gniadek for the Golden Panthers kept the Mean Green lineup off balance for most of the game and pitched a complete game, allowing only four hits and one earned run to collect her sixth win of the season.



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International relations student sees beauty in simple pose

POSING, page 1

While Conklin was helping out in a rural village, her mother was concerned about the differences in the availability of modern technology.

“Fortunately, modern technology of the cell phone kept me in touch with her,” Cheryl Conklin said. “That may have been what got me through those months of her being so far away – I don’t know if I could have handled it if I had no knowledge of where she was or if she was OK. I feel Sara’s work in Tanzania basically ‘cemented’ the direction in life she has chosen.”

After rethinking her future in the arts, Conklin decided to transfer to FIU to study international relations. At FIU she was given the opportunity to learn more about other cultures and The SaraPose really took off, she said.

Darren Shillingford, a fellow FIU student working with her in the executive branch of FIU’s student government, encouraged Conklin to take the photos from a small Facebook album to a website archiving people’s photos and experiences.

He took his own SaraPose photo during a visit home in the Dominican Republic with his best friend of 15 years. He noticed people’s interest in the idea after many people standing nearby started inquiring about the pose.

Those who submitted photos to www.sarapose.com are asked to write a description of the setting and importance of the moment. Conklin found that some of her favorites were not about the place, but the meaning behind it.

Anamaria Arias had her SaraPose photographed in front of a cathedral in Toledo, Spain while on vacation with her grandmother and dedicated it to her. She said the religious landmark was “a testament to the importance of the spirituality to mankind, and the greatness that can be achieved through tolerance.”

SaraPose participants have taken photos of the pose during monumental events such as their graduation, prom or family vacations. Some have just taken the photo in a local attraction to remember the time spent there and who they were with.

Hollis Bubla, a junior at FIU, took her SaraPose photo on a spontaneous trip to Sequoia National Park in California.

“The whole trip was one big spur of the moment after the next and I got to see some of the biggest trees in the world,” Bubla said. “My pose conveys a beautifully overwhelming sense of being consumed by something so much bigger than myself. I couldn’t believe where I was.”

Those moments move Conklin. “Sometimes I’ll cry reading [the personal stories] because it’s so beautiful to know that people really take a part of this project on their own initiative and they really just like the idea,” Conklin said.

The motto for the project is “uniting the world.” Shillingford said if anyone can do it, Conklin can.

“Sara has enough passion for the world to unite the hearts of everyone. She sees beauty in even the smallest moments, and that is what she



ESRA ERDOGAN/THE BEACON

Sara Conklin and William-Jose Velez, a senior biomedical engineer major and publicity manager for the SaraPose project, study by the Green Library lake on March 28.

is trying to emphasize in the poses,” he said.

“I work with the International Student and Scholars Services at FIU. I have already begun spreading the word to FIU’s international community. I know that in the upcoming months, Sara is going to have a lot more poses from around the world. I hope the word keeps spreading.”

Conklin hopes for the photo series to grow beyond her group of friends and their friends. The project has yet to receive a photo from a complete stranger. To date, the pose has reached

20 countries and six continents. Conklin says she hopes to one day reach all seven because to her it means she’d have a piece of herself and her mission all over the world.

“The SaraPose is Sara’s scrapbook of life so far,” Cheryl Conklin said. “Somehow I feel it is just the tip of the iceberg.”

Adriana Rodriguez, a senior journalism major, produced this story in the JOURNAL 3303 Advanced News Writing course taught by Dr. Fred Blevens.

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Women's film festival to highlight artistic contributions

KATHY PAZ
Staff Writer

When Kathryn Bigelow won the 2010 Academy Award for Achievement in Directing for her work in *The Hurt Locker*, some cheered while others looked on with dropped jaws. It was the first time in the history of the Oscars that a woman had taken home the golden trophy in that category.

The Women's International Film and Arts Festival debuted in 2005 as an auxiliary venue exhibiting films for and about women. Since that time, the one-day five-film event has evolved to an extravaganza that spans five days and showcases 50 movies "for women, by women and for all who love women."

The Festival, however, isn't restricted to motion pictures alone, it incorporates visual and performance art, as well as other means of artistic expression in its lineup. In the past, it has featured appearances by iconic names such as Alley Sheedy, Kate Siegal, Lucrecia and Vivica A. Fox.

"Our sixth year anniversary is especially exciting because we have the support of the city of Hollywood," said Yvonne McCormack-Lyons, President and Executive Director of WIFF, in the original press release. "Film lovers will get to experience the city in a very refreshing way that supports our cause and the city and all its beauty."

Taking place from March 30 through Apr. 3 in Broward, WIFF

is one of only two festivals in the Southeastern region of the United States specifically devoted to women. The event aims to celebrate women and bring them together from all parts of the globe in an effort to create and share dialogue about prevalent issues.

According to the Festival's website, "With women representing only seven percent of film directors, every effort should be made to enhance the opportunity for women's voices to be heard and to present a wider range of roles and choices for women."

The selection of films to be shown is extensive and includes selections from various countries including India, Haiti, Iran and Japan. The Women's Inter-

national Film and Arts Festival will kick off with a special red carpet event featuring "Latin Music USA: Divas and Superstars," a film directed by local Emmy Award winning filmmaker, Adriana Bosch.

It offers a commentary on the Latin Pop explosion and how it has influenced both pop culture and the music industry as a whole. Artists in the picture include Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and Gloria Estefan.

The sixth anniversary of the Festival will also have workshops hosted by Gregory Allen Howard, the writer of *Remember the Titans*, and panel discussions. Some of the presentations to be on the watch for are the documentary *Wise Women Speak*,

featuring Jane Fonda, Della Reese, poet Nikki Giovanni and former "Essence" magazine editor Susan Taylor; *The Whistle Blower* starring Academy Award winners Rachel Weisz, Vanessa Redgrave and Monica Bellucci; and *Forget Me Not* with Tobias Menzies.

The 2011 screenings will be held at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts and AMC Aventura. A complete schedule can be found online at WIFF's website.

Tickets for individual films are available for \$10 to students with a valid ID. Tickets for other special events taking place throughout the week are sold individually and vary in pricing.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In a sea of sushi, Akashi's 'Alex #2' roll reigns supreme

My friend Zeysha and I have what I'd like to call a "foodie bucket list," a collection of foods and restaurants to try before we're six feet under. I am happy to report that we have crossed one of the items off.

COLUMNIST



JASMYN ELLIOTT

Zeysha and I have been scheming to try Akashi, a Japanese sushi place with a great reputation.

We had our hearts set on the location near Sunset Place, but time and circumstance took us, along with our friend Carly, to their little-known second location, 3444 Main Highway, Coconut Grove.

The main dining room at Akashi's Coconut Grove location is the size of a postage stamp, so we decided

to sit on their patio. Though it's not much larger, it's surrounded by a low wall of plants, offering some privacy from the street and a bit more elbow room.

Our waitress, though a bit slow on service, was very friendly.

We started out with their vegetable tempura, a fool-proof Japanese classic that is consistently delicious no matter where I go.

Although the usual suspects, such as broccoli, carrots and string beans were in the mix, I was pleasantly surprised to find asparagus, zucchini slices and sweet potatoes were added.

Almost anything that is fried is yummy, but I was especially pleased to find that it was piping hot and freshly made instead of sitting under a heat lamp.

While delicious on its own, the

flavor factor was enhanced when dipped in the accompanying teriyaki sauce. In short, I think asparagus tempura is my new favorite vegetable.

Whenever I mention Akashi to a friend that has been there, I am always commanded to try the Alex #2 Roll.

Let me tell you, I am so glad I followed the advice.

The Alex #2 Roll is basically a souped-up dragon roll, or what I like to call a "best of sushi" roll: shrimp tempura, crab salad, and cream cheese topped with avocado, spicy mayonnaise and eel sauce, wrapped in the ubiquitous white rice and topped with tempura crumbles.

Between the slight kick from the spicy mayo, the creamy freshness of the avocado and the savory flavors of the fish, one bite and I was in heaven.

The tempura crumbles were a

much-appreciated addition to the meal. Even now, as I type this, I am craving it and no other sushi roll will do.

Another roll of note is the Sunset roll, a combination of salmon, white fillet, tuna, crab and avocado. While the Alex #2 is still in my dreams, the Sunset roll solidified that Akashi serves nothing but the freshest fish.

Although it didn't have any special toppings or sauces, the Sunset roll was still satisfying and flavorful on its own, perhaps due to the hamachi-grilled white fillet. It was also nice to see that each roll was made to order, even Carly's vegetable roll.

As with any sushi place, hot meals were also on the menu.

Zeysha decided to order a side of chicken fried rice along with her sushi. With one bite, I was pleasantly surprised to taste fluffy, flavorful rice with smoky bits of chicken rather

than the greasy, overcooked versions I often settle for. The serving was deceptively small, as that tiny bowl actually managed to fill both of us up.

Contrary to the expensive prices often associated with sushi, Akashi's menu falls under the mid-price range, with its rolls never exceeding \$11.95, plus tax, a great bargain considering the portions are quite generous. Between the three of us, our bill barely came out to \$50, including an appetizer and tip. When split three ways, it was a great bargain.

Overall, Akashi is a great, casual place for sushi, with a chill atmosphere, affordable prices and great service. Now, go try that Alex #2 roll!

Food for Thought is a bi-weekly column on food. Look for it every other Wednesday.

THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2011

BEGINNER'S SUNSET YOGA



WHEN: 5-6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Organic garden

STAR PARTY

Come out and gaze at the Sun with our telescopes!
WHEN: 8-10 p.m.
WHERE: MMC AstroPad

MOVIE NIGHT: THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO



WHEN: 7-9 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: MMC SIPA103

RAINBOW CAFE

WHEN: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
WHERE: BBC WUC 245

HOLY MASS AND FAITH JAM

WHEN: 12-3 p.m.
WHERE: MMC PC 431

SPANISH YOGA

WHEN: 2-3 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Farmer's Market

GRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCE FAIR

WHEN: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Betty Chapman Plaza

INTERNSHIPS 101

Come and learn about the different types of internships and the top reasons to why you should intern. Students also learn strategies in researching, applying and preparing for internships through the Career Services Office.

WHEN: 2-3 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free and open to all FIU students and alumni
WHERE: BBC WUC 255

WHERE THE JOBS ARE: GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

A workshop that presents practical knowledge about employment and internship opportunities available with the Federal Government.

WHEN: 12-1 p.m.
WHERE: BBC WUC 255

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

8TH ANNUAL SAGE FUNDRAISING RECEPTION & SILENT AUCTION

WHEN: 6-9 p.m.
WHERE: BBC WUC Ballrooms

ENGINEERING & COMPUTING SHOWCASE

WHEN: 4-6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: FIU Engineering Center Cafeteria Pit

GRADUATE STUDENT AND FACULTY RECOGNITION RECEPTION

WHEN: 4-6 p.m.
WHERE: MMC College of Law: Atrium

MOVIE FORUM - "OUT OF CONTROL-AIDS IN BLACK AMERICA"



WHEN: 7-9 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Open to all FIU student, free with panther I.D., \$1 for general admission
WHERE: MMC AHC3-110

SIGNATURE EVENT: COLOMBIAN NIGHT

WHEN: 8-11 p.m.
WHERE: MMC GC 24

YOUTH FAIR: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FAIR & EXPOSITION

WHEN: 6-11:45 p.m.
HOW MUCH: To purchase special rates for the tickets, please visit: <http://tickets.fairexpo.com/FIU>
WHERE: Tamiami Park

INTERMEDIATE MOONLIGHT YOGA



WHEN: 6:30-7:45 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: The garden

SPC MOVIE SERIES: LITTLE FOCKERS



WHEN: 3 & 7 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: BBC WUC Theater

If you are interested in having an event featured in the calendar, contact: calendar@fiusm.com

PIMP MY RIDE



ALEXIA ESCALANTE/THE BEACON

Senior Sasha Adorno, who is a BFA in sculpture, works on the "Fiat Project" for an upcoming exhibition at the Frost Museum.

POINT-COUNTERPOINT

STUDENT TIME MANAGEMENT

Reminder system is a necessity

PAOLO RAMOS
Staff Writer

Students at the University live a fast-paced life. While education is one of the most important factors of a person's well being, it is not the only important aspect, and this fact should be taken into consideration by professors.

If student success is a driving factor of educators, then it should be kept in mind when considering the amount of resources made available to students.

Educators should provide moderate guidance and consideration when considering supplements to a course. A simple solution to this predicament could be to implement some sort of reminder system that could help students manage the several aspects of their lives better.

The majority of students at the University are commuters, spending several hours a week just driving to and from school. Furthermore, other aspects of life take up these students' time

when they are not studying, ranging from mundane activities such as socializing and spending time with family to working at a job to make ends meet. If student success is a driving factor of educators, then it should be kept in mind when considering the amount of resources made available to students.

Jacqueline Choowong is a senior studying pharmacy, a considerably challenging subject with an intense course load. "To most professors, I'm just another student. What they don't know is that I work over 30 hours a week at a pharmacy, to support my seven year old son. It's not easy managing my time, and I've definitely missed assignments because of it. A reminder system would definitely help me keep track of things and prioritize," she said.

There are countless circumstances where time management may be problematic when it comes to the lives of most of the student body. Course load alone may prove to be difficult, especially to those who have to take on more than they can handle due to scholarship or graduation requirements. In short, sometimes students do not have a choice in taking on more than they can handle.

When it comes to the actual reminder system, utilities exist today so that little effort would be required to

implement it. From Facebook notifications to bank statement texts and emails, it has been exhibited that alert systems can be entirely autonomous, only requiring initial input in order to be put into use.

The University has implemented similarly structured alert systems. Using Panthermail, information about events both on and off campus is relayed as well as information from several student organizations and administration.

With technology available, the only conscious effort required by educators would be to synchronize information such as due dates and reminders at the beginning of the year, and setting up a delivery schedule at the discretion of the professor using students University or personal emails.

There is no legitimate excuse for doing poorly at school because of poor time management. In theory, everybody attending university is expected to have a handle on their affairs. As desirable as it is, nobody is perfect, and things do happen.

A reminder system is by no means a panacea for time management, and should never become a crutch for students to lean on. However, when executed properly, it can only serve as an enhancement to a student's educational experience.

Responsibility lies with the student

NEDA GHOMESHI
Asst. Opinion Editor

Earning a high quality education should be a top priority for all students. In this exceedingly competitive market, success is difficult to attain without a proper education.

Developing an attitude of being responsible and prepared is part of the education that a student earns, especially at the University. Students should manage their time effectively to ensure success, both in the classroom and beyond. Essentially, we should not rely on professors to provide our success.

This is my third year at the University. I am currently majoring in International Business and Marketing. Most of my courses provide an Internet component through Blackboard, which enables students to view the syllabus, browse the calendar and regularly check discussion forums. Essentially, Blackboard provides all of the necessary task management resources for students to succeed in their course. Whether students take advantage of these resources is entirely up to them.

Some courses at the University lack an online component; however, at the beginning of the semester, professors provide each student with a syllabus. Generally, a syllabus

provides all of the critical dates, including exam dates. As college students, we should use the syllabus as a reference.

With today's technology, there are multiple ways to keep track of one's classes and events, such as the University email calendar, and smart phone application.

Students should manage their time effectively to ensure success.

Basically, there is no excuse for missing a deadline.

After earning a bachelor's degree at the University, I should be prepared for the real world of working and assuming responsibilities. With no professor to remind me, it will be my responsibility to be prepared at all times. Realistically, my employer is not going to send me messages reminding me of an upcoming deadline. Students at the University are fortunate to be constantly reminded of upcoming deadlines; in fact, these reminders are hindering a student's growth. Mateo Romero, a junior studying Economics supports my point. He said, "I think that professors need to spend less time reminding us about our responsibilities."

The University is

primarily a commuter school. Many students have other responsibilities such as a job. However, earning an education should be a student's main focus and working on other activities should not be used as an excuse to neglect school.

Christopher Patron, junior, is about to graduate with a bachelor's degree in Finance and International Business and is a full-time sales and service specialist for Bank of America. He believes that his professors provide all of the necessary information for him to do well in his classes. He said, "Most of my classes have a Blackboard component, too. I rarely miss an assignment because the syllabus is always available."

These reminders are luxuries, not necessities. We are in college, one step away from the working world. It is time that we accept our role and be prepared to do what is needed in order to be successful. Keeping track of one's obligations and assignments is just a small part of the world we face.

Time management is a skill that should be developed throughout college. Students use lack of time as a poor excuse to their failure. It is not the professor's responsibility to remind us of upcoming due dates; rather, it is the student's responsibility to keep track of their own classes and obligations.

Charlie Sheen in need of help, not media attention

JORGE VALENS
Editor in Chief

Charlie Sheen has gone from the highest-paid television actor around to one of the most successful Internet movements since Dramatic Chipmunk or Sad Keanu Reeves. But where both the chipmunk and Sad Keanu were hilarious, Sheen is not.

Sheen was a fairly successful actor. Aside from starring in one of the most-watched sitcoms of all time, "Two and a Half Men," he has had a successful film career. However, his career will forever be overshadowed by his apparent and dangerous drug habit and the media circus that has surrounded it.

Sheen has toured the major talk shows and has done countless interviews in which his behavior was clearly erratic, and after seeing

one of his netcasts it was clear he is suffering from a major problem, a problem that everyone is ignoring for the sake of ratings, readers and entertainment.

Viewers, listeners and followers of Sheen's media blitz seemed glued to their screens, desperate for any shred of entertainment.

When Sheen registered his Twitter account, it broke the Guinness World Record for the time it took to reach a million followers, 25 hours. Currently, Sheen's account lists 2,869,128 followers. His UStream broadcast brought in hundreds of thousands of viewers as well.

Everyone I speak with seems to come to a similarly worded conclusion: "Charlie Sheen is f***ing hilarious, man! Winning!"

The fact is Sheen is not hilarious, man. Sure, he says stupid things that are funny but the man behind those phrases is a troubled man with

a drug problem. He has people who care for him, kids who love him; he is a human being suffering from a disease.

"He's an extraordinary man. If he had cancer, how would we treat him? The disease of addiction is a form of cancer, and you have to have an equal measure of concern and love and lift them up, so that's what we do for him," said the actor's father, Martin Sheen in a Feb. 2011 interview with *Sky News*.

The mainstream American press and the people who market products and benefit from this man's misery seem to forget that point.

"One way or another, by one definition and diagnosis or another, Charlie Sheen is a sick man," said Jeff Jarvis, journalism professor at the City University of New York on his blog, Buzzmachine.com. "News people are ill-serving him and the issue of mental illness in

this country by putting him on the air as if he were just another source, another celebrity. They are not informing the public. They are exploiting [Sheen]."

Even at the University, we cannot escape Sheen's reach. The University has recently released t-shirts with Sheen's popular "winning" phrase on them, and have prominently displayed them on Athletics' main website.

Is there anyone in the University's attention-starved marketing department that thought it would be a bad idea to associate the school's image with an actor who is well-known not for his acting prowess, but for his history with drug, alcohol and spousal abuse?

As soon as I finish writing this piece, I am going to unfollow Sheen on Twitter and so should you. Sheen doesn't need our attention; he needs help.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Have something on your mind? Send your thoughts in (500 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 and year.



PAKISTAN

11 troops killed in Pakistan attack

Islamist militants ambushed a convoy of Pakistani troops traveling close to the Afghan border on Monday, killing 11 in an unusually bloody attack, a government official said.



PALESTINE

Abbas would give up US aid for unity

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is making a heavy push for reconciliation with Hamas and is willing to give up hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid if that's what it takes to forge Palestinian unity.



SYRIA

President wavers on crackdown or compromise

Syrian President Bashar Assad wavered between cracking down and compromising in one of the Mid-East's most authoritarian and anti-Western nations as protesters in a southern city defied security forces.

Farmer's market visits, surveys campus interest

LUIS ROCA

Contributing Writer

After their first experience with a farmer's market on campus, students have asked for healthier food stands in Biscayne Bay.

On the first day of March, Brothers Farmers market installed a stand on the north side of the Wolfe University Center, providing fresh and healthy food at reasonable prices.

The stand offered a variety of fruits and vegetables: including pineapples, strawberries, cantaloupes, oranges, grapes, kiwis, tomatoes and others.

Some of the students walking by the stand were surprised and gratified at the same time.

"This is great! Instead of buying a burrito, I can eat fresh fruit and it is even cheaper," said Michael Vasconez, social science freshman, while buying a pair of peaches.

The Wellness Center invited the farmer's market as part of the 2011 Wellness Expo.

"The expo was meant to promote health and wellness on campus," said Dona S. Walcott, assistant director of the Wellness Center. "The farmer's market came to campus for the first time to introduce students and



LUIS ROCA/THE BEACON

Students buying fruits from the Brothers Farmer's Market stand which was located outside of Panther Square on the north side of the Wolfe University Center on March 2.

faculty to fruits and vegetables and encourage them to eat better instead of just chips and sodas."

Three weeks since the expo happened students await the return of the market.

"Having access to fresh fruit and [not have] to go out of my

way to get it is invaluable," said Andrew Altemann, a hospitality major.

Raisa Becerra, a public relation senior, agreed with Altemann and said, "I love eating healthy and they should do a [farmer's market] more often, it's very convenient

for students in the dorms."

"The idea is to have it every month but we need more sponsors," said Walcott. "We are also trying to bring the fresh fruit vending machine to campus."

Unlike Biscayne Bay Campus, the Modesto Maidique Campus

has a fresh-fruit vending machine and a farmer's market that operates weekly.

"I think eating well is very important," said Andrea Moreno, a graduate student. "We should have the fresh market [at BBC] every month."

The vendors from Brothers Farmer's Market were enthusiastic about coming back to BBC.

"We were invited this time," said Lissette Munoz, manager of Brothers Farmers Market, "but we'd love to come every month."

At their stand, cantaloupes sold for \$2, corn three for \$1, two boxes of strawberries sold for \$3 and honeydews for \$3 each.

Brother's Farmers Market additionally offers a variety of organic fruits and vegetables. They have two locations one: in Davie and one in Hollywood, but they also specialized in bringing their produces to fairs and events.

According to Munoz, the sales at BBC were more than decent for being their first time there.

The continuity of the event will be determined within the next few weeks, but according to Walcott, it is more likely that it will become a once-a-month event next semester if all the logistic are successfully completed.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dominican president hints at another run

AP STAFF

Associated Press

The Dominican Republic's president hinted Sunday that he that he might seek a third consecutive presidency, despite constitutional term limits that seem to bar such a move.

Leaders of President Leonel Fernandez's party have been promoting his candidacy while lobbying for constitutional reform that would allow him to run next year. They presented Fernandez Sunday with a petition apparently signed by 2.2 million people calling for his re-election in the Caribbean nation of 6.3 million registered voters.

Fernandez, who is serving his second consecutive term, said he would let leaders of his Dominican Liberation Party decide on his possible candidacy in the 2012 election.

"I have been and I am a soldier of the Dominican Liberation Party. I put forth these 2.2 million signatures,

that are 2.2 million votes, so that the party decides," Fernandez said.

The current constitution — adopted in January 2010 under an agreement between Fernandez and the main opposition party — limits presidents to two consecutive four-year terms. However, they are permitted to serve again after skipping an election cycle.

Ruling party officials say the constitution, which has been revised numerous times, should be updated to allow Fernandez to restart the clock and run for a third consecutive term.

The Dominican Republic restricted re-elections in the mid-1990s to prevent repeat campaigns in the style of former President Joaquin Balaguer, who held power for more than two decades and was known for jailing critics. Allegations of fraud were widespread during his tenure.

The Dominican Revolutionary Party, the country's main opposition party, recently nominated former President Hipolito Mejia as its presidential candidate for 2012.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Carter visits Cuba amid dispute

PETER ORSI

Associated Press

Former President Jimmy Carter arrived in Cuba Monday to discuss economic policies and ways to improve Washington-Havana relations, which are even more tense than usual over the imprisonment of a U.S. contractor on the island.

Carter was scheduled to meet with Jewish leaders — suggesting that his visit will deal at least partly with the case of Alan Gross, who was arrested in December 2009 while working for Bethesda, Maryland-based Development Alternatives Inc. on a USAID-backed democracy-building project.

Gross has said he was trying to improve internet access for Cuba's small Jewish community. Jewish leaders there, however, have denied working with him.

He was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison earlier this month for crimes against the state for bringing illegal telecommunications equipment

into the country.

Carter is expected to meet with President Raul Castro, other government officials and Roman Catholic Cardinal Jaime Ortega before leaving on Wednesday.

The trip is under the auspices of the Carter Center, at the invitation of the Cuban government, and is not an official U.S. mission.

Still, both the State Department and Gross' family have expressed hope that Carter's trip may help facilitate the contractor's release.

"We have repeatedly urged the government of Cuba to release Mr. Gross and we encourage others who meet with Cuban officials, including President Carter, to also voice their concerns and make this request," State spokesman Mark Toner said last week.

"If he is able to help Alan in any way while he is there, we will be extraordinarily grateful," Gross's wife Judy E. Gross said in statement over the weekend. "Our family is desperate for Alan to return home, after nearly 16 months in prison. We continue to hope and pray that the Cuban

authorities will release him immediately on humanitarian grounds."

Cuba calls Gross a mercenary working on a program paid for by Washington that aimed to bring down Cuba's socialist system, and it has presented him as evidence of U.S. intentions to unleash a "cyberwar" to destabilize the island.

U.S. officials say no rapprochement between the Cold War enemies is possible while Gross remains jailed.

Washington and Havana have not had formal diplomatic relations since the 1960s, and the United States maintains economic and financial sanctions on the island. Carter visited Cuba in May 2002 on a six-day tour during which he met with then-President Fidel Castro and criticized both Washington's embargo and the lack of political plurality on the island.

Associated Press Writer Andrea Rodriguez in Havana contributed to this report.