

4-16-2008

The Beacon, April 16, 2008

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BBC concerned about cuts

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INSUFFICIENT FUNDS



TOUGH TIMES: University President Modesto Maidique, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Vivian Sanchez and Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald Berkman take turns answering questions during Monday's Town hall meeting.

President discusses cuts with community

CHRISTINA VEIGA
News Director

Top University officials presented a contentious three-year plan detailing how FIU will survive pending budget cuts at a second town hall meeting on April 14.

University President Modesto Maidique, Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald Berkman and Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Vivian Sanchez presented tiered approaches explaining which areas of the University will be most affected by the cuts of up to \$35 million.

All emphasized that none of the plans will be finalized until the Faculty Senate, Budget Stabilization Taskforce and Board of Trustees review them and give ultimate approval.

"What we are going to discuss and put on the table today are not decisions that have been made," Berkman said. "I felt, and the president felt, that it is better as a community to share with you what we are thinking and what

our recommendations are for closing the gap, rather than leave everyone in the dark."

Opposition arose when Berkman took the stage to detail the four-tier system used to determine the importance of colleges, schools, centers, institutes and departments. Berkman announced that all centers and institutes have been granted level four status, with many being closed, restructured or pressured to find alternate sources of funding.

Representatives from the Center for Labor Research and Studies, which faces restructuring, were present with signs to protest their position as a low priority to the University.

Tier three colleges and schools include the College of Law, College of Education, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Engineering, School of Business, International Studies and Architecture and the Arts.

"There has been a push by the provost to eradicate the school of mass communication," said Roberto Moreno, senior. "Sir, all I



PHOTOS BY GIO GUADARRAMA/THE BEACON

JUST THE FACTS: President Modesto Maidique presents a PowerPoint presentation on the upcoming budget cuts.

have to say is 'how dare you?'"

Sanchez was also met with backlash in response to her four-tiered approach, with vehicles, mail/duplicating/printing, e-mail support, construction management and real estate development cited as level four priorities.

Various mail center employees were present to protest the possible outsourcing of their department. They encouraged Sanchez to look within for creative solutions for saving their department.

"You have the talent here. There is too much politics," said Urias Martinez, a mail room employee.

Maidique blamed Medicare and Medicaid for straining the national budget, and the crippled housing market in Florida for the state budget deficit of nearly \$5 billion.

"Since construction and housing are such important elements of our economy, if those sectors have a cold, Florida gets a pneumonia. And when Florida gets pneumonia, we, who are funded primarily through the state of Florida, experience a real problem," Maidique said.

Maidique presented his plan for "FIU 3.0," which detailed a

BUDGET CUTS, page 2

Students show up, speak out

GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Life! Editor

For two hours on April 14, a section of the Graham Center Ballrooms seemed more like a ninja convention than a town hall meeting.

Dozens of headband-wearing students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and others attended the meeting to support their respective schools, which they feel are threatened by FIU's state-mandated budget cuts.

Supporters of the Center for Labor Research and Studies carried a hand-made sign in front of the ballroom's stage reading "Save the Labor Center."

Similarly, SJMC students with headbands reading "SJMC Rocks" prepared their own defense during the meeting's Q&A section, citing the School of Journalism and Mass Communications' reputation for producing Hispanic journalists.

At the meeting, University President Modesto Maidique, Provost Ronald Berkman and Chief Financial Officer Vivian Sanchez proposed a three-year budget

REACTIONS, page 2

Maidique's blame game unfounded



Commentary

Chris Cabral
Asst. Life! Editor

The crowd in the Graham Center Ballrooms buzzed with a nervous commotion as tense students and faculty members waited to see where the axe would fall.

University President Maidique stood before the crowd, the room fell into a grim and somber silence.

As FIU stands to grapple with the consequences of a catastrophic \$2 billion cut to public education by the state government, President Maidique placed the blame for this crisis squarely where it didn't belong: on the "secular force" known as the Medicare/Medic-

CABRAL, page 5



GIO GUADARRAMA/THE BEACON

POINTED QUESTIONS: Jose Pagliery, a senior in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, asks a question during Monday's town hall meeting.

Worried students fight for future of colleges

REACTIONS, page 1

plan for the University. The plan places each University center and department in one of four levels of priority: those in the first tier will receive the least cuts while those in the lower tiers will receive more.

The Labor Center is a level four priority; SJMC is considered a level three priority.

"The politically expedient thing would be to make all the victims equal," Berkman said. "But it is not the responsible thing to do."

Stephanie Palacino, a senior majoring in journalism, is concerned about the cuts and their impact on the

number of class offerings. "I find it ironic that there's an insistence on having enough classes offered when there are journalism students who have been here five or more years because they are trying to get the classes they need."

Berkman, however, said the potential cuts would not affect class offerings.

"One way I will not allow the deans to meet the cuts is to gut the instructional program," Berkman said. "

Other students such as David Dial, Student Government Council-University Park nursing representative, are worried that the priority system will encourage competition among the different

colleges because they will be fighting for funding from an already stretched budget.

"These priorities pit college versus college – ultimately dividing the University," Dial said.

Despite student concerns voiced at the meeting, faculty and staff greatly outnumbered students in attendance at the packed ballrooms. Marbely Hernandez, current SGC-UP president, said one reason for this is students' lack of understanding in budget issues.

"Students need 360 degrees understanding of these issues," Hernandez said. "A lot of students feel that priority four or three means that their school will be closing overnight. That's not true."

Hernandez does admit that these budget cuts will pose challenges for the future SGA administration.

"SGA still needs to be the cohesive student voice," she said. "It's a different year and there has to be a focus on providing knowledge on these issues to students."

The next town hall meeting to discuss the budget situation is scheduled for May 15.

Centers, institutes at most risk for future cuts

CHARLIE GRAU
Editor in Chief

Centers and institutes find themselves on the chopping block while the University figures out how to combat a budget crisis for the next fiscal year.

At a town hall meeting on April 14 in the Graham Center Ballrooms, Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald Berkman said the University started taking a look at the dollar savings that are in centers and institutes.

In order to help combat the 4 to 7 percent budget cut the University is facing, various centers and institutes would be closed down or consolidated.

According to Berkman, closing the centers and institutes will help save state funds which would in turn be used to hire more faculty.

"Centers and institutes are started and funded with institutional dollars for a certain number of years. The expectation is that these centers and institutes will take these dollars over a three year period and use those dollars to generate grants and gifts that will make centers

and institutes self sufficient," Berkman said. "Most universities have forgotten about the responsibility of centers and institutes to provide a return on that investment."

Over the next year, some centers will either be consolidated, closed down or have 21 to 50 percent of their budgets cut.

Berkman said that everything presented at the meeting was not definite, but just recommendations.

But some faculty from centers and institutes disagree with Berkman's view.

Bruce Nissen, director of research at the Center of Labor and Research Studies, said the provost's remarks about centers and institutes owing money to University was "hogwash."

"The Labor Center was created with a special state appropriation and FIU got extra money to create the center. It was created by an act of the state legislature and funding by the state legislature," Nissen said.

The center is one that has been proposed to have its budget reduced by 50 percent this year and 100 percent the next.

"The center has served the community over the years. This shows a lack of commitment to the community, especially to the under-served population of the community like the homeless and immigrant community. It's people like that who benefit most from our research and training," said Center of Labor and Research Studies Director Dawn Addy.

"They claim they want to serve under-served communities and claim they want to be a new urban community, well here we are, we're the ones that do that," Nissen said.

Despite the bleak news that was delivered, some students believe there is still hope.

Research assistant for the center Cynthia Hernandez and Freshman Kevin Gonzalez walked in front of the audience minutes before the town hall meeting started with a huge banner that read, "Save the Labor Center."

"Our struggle is going to continue and we're going to continue to fight. The support is continuing to grow. I don't think the battle is over and we're certainly not finished," Hernandez said.

Executives lay out plan to deal with budget cuts

BUDGET CUTS, page 1

new plan for the University in response to the cuts of 4 to 7 percent.

The new plan calls for FIU to become a comprehensive urban research university with a "sharp strategic focus," managed enrollment, higher tuition, more public assistance, private partnerships and more efficient management and infrastructure.

The president also laid

out his five most important areas for preservation. They included:

- Becoming a top 15 public research university; down from Maidique's original goal of reaching the top 10
- Increasing undergraduate retention and graduation rates by adding more advising staff
- Focusing on health and life sciences by moving forward with the FIU College of

Medicine

- Growing student life activities and alumni affinity
- Focusing on advancement capabilities through capital campaigns

"These are cuts that we must live with year after year," Berkman said. "To make one year cuts and not worry about the out years and what units are going to do in the next two years will make the cuts all the more painful."

THE BEACON

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TOWN HALL MEETING

Proposed consolidation concerns SJMC

School worried it will lose its identity

to figure out a way to get ourselves back to that balance without relying on Tallahassee and that's what I'd like to hear more of which I haven't heard [and that is] what are we going to do to make more money?"

One of the greatest concerns that BBC faces is the future of the SJMC. The School falls under priority three, which goes up to priority four, of the funding list and is being considered to fold into The School of Arts and Sciences.

"We definitely want to keep our identity as a school. We have our own activities we have our own thing going on and it just feels like we would lose a lot and if something like that happens we will lose a lot of folks too and that's a little scary," said Veronica Sztam, assistant director of student services for SJMC.

"The ball is in the dean's court. She will need to make some important decisions and hopefully she will be able to deliver a program that is tight, well focused and still sustainable," Fernandez said.

With all the concerns the budget cuts created, Fernandez was excited to see the amount of student participation at the town hall meeting.

"I'm very proud anytime that I see students feeling strongly and compelled to take action," Fernandez said. "That's why we are education our students so they can voice their opinion. It's a great lesson in citizenship I'm happy for this openness and for students expressing their opinions and I don't think those opinions fall on deaf ears."

The University-wide town hall meeting that was telecasted simultaneously to the Biscayne Bay Campus from University Park caused grave concern among faculty and staff.

"We're definitely in crisis," said Zachary Trautenberg, IT and marketing specialist for the Wolfe University Center at BBC.

In order to bridge the estimated \$10 million to \$36 million gap that the state budget cuts will have on FIU, University President Modesto Maidique presented a budget reduction strategy that will have an impact on the University.

"Its very important for the FIU community first to be aware of what's happening and second to be conscious of the facts that these cuts are necessary, they're unavoidable and hard choices must be made," BBC Vice Provost Damian Fernandez said.

Although the budget cuts are a concern to Jose Rodriguez, director of student services for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, his main concern is what the University will do to generate more revenue.

"You have to operate either in the balance or in the black and we have

STUDYING IN THE SUN



NATHAN VALENTINE/THE BEACON

REDUCING STRESS: Alicia Eisenbach studies for her law and ethics exam in the shadow of "No Turning Back," a sculpture made by environmental artist Ross Power on loan to Biscayne Bay Campus, April 14.

Aspiring artist J.Carr satisfies his 'need for speed' through lyricism

SHERVIN BAIN
Contributing Writer

To most of the student body, Orane James Carney is simply a junior majoring in advertising here at FIU, but unbeknownst to many, he is pursuing a career in the entertainment industry as J.Carr, "The Future Of The Franchise."

"Even if I wasn't me, you would still criticize me, so what's the use of slowin' down? I gotta need for my speed," are just some of the lyrics written by J.Carr.

His lyrics are intended to endorse diligence and encourage a positive attitude to all who listen.

"I make music for me, and then again, I make music for when someone is doing something and they say the words to my song, it will make [them] feel better about what you're doing," J.Carr said.

Born in St. Elizabeth,

“ J.Carr, The Future of the Franchise

I have so much to live for and I have so much that I've already had to live with. [It's] the need to keep going, not stop; all the negative backlash. You can't slow down.

Jamaica, J.Carr came to the U.S. at age two.

He moved to the Cayman Islands during middle school, then returned to the U.S. for high school.

J.Carr's absent father promised him a saxophone so that he could play with the high school band.

"I was one of the best on the islands if not the best - I was a saxophone prodigy," J.Carr said.

He never received the instrument, so he explored another form of entertainment - rap.

Although he is inspired by many pessimistic scenarios, he said his music is optimistic.

J.Carr's goal is to be an entertainer. He is known by his peers to be an enthusiastic individual, and is rarely

ever seen depressed.

"I have so much to live for and I have so much that I've already had to live with," J.Carr said. "[It's] the need to keep going, not stop; all the negative backlash. You can't slow down."

Christopher Cadet, a sophomore majoring in television production, enjoys J.Carr's music and predicts a bright future for him.

"He's pretty good. He has a west coast style mixed with Miami, and he really knows how to rhyme," Cadet said. "I can see [J.Carr] expanding into other things besides rap, kind of like Will Smith. I can see him being a host, an actor or a comedian."

J.Carr will be performing live at The Pre Finals Finale during the 2008 Spring Pep Rally on April 17.

"It's part of Release Week, which is to help students calm down and relax before finals, so they don't feel stressed. Also, [it's] to

build a good relationship with local artists around FIU," said Cadet, who is also chair of Release Week.

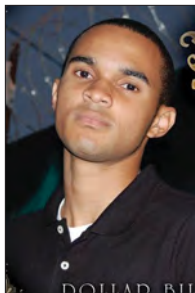
There will be eight other rappers performing at this event including Joe Hound, C-Ride, Young Breed, Hustleman & Ghost P, Smokey and AJ.

The show will take place at 10 p.m. in the Biscayne Bay Campus' Wolfe University Center Ballroom.

J.Carr explained that unlike the claims of many rappers, he doesn't pretend to keep it "real."

"Who does keep it real? I keep it realistic. We all have dreams. We're all dreamers. I mean, I don't say I kill anybody; I don't say I ride in a big bodied Benz, but when a metaphor comes across, I'll say something like, 'You can't see me, 'cuz I'm ghostin', I'm not a ghost.'"

To get a preview of J.Carr's music visit: www.jcarrmusic.com



J.CARR



THE BEACON | Editorial

Administration's budget plan painful, but an unfortunate reality we now face

There is no question that the University is facing the worst budget cuts in its history.

The State is asking University administration to cut anywhere from \$9.2 to \$16 million from its annual operating budget.

In lieu of this, University President Modesto Maidique and his staff have been forced to make some difficult decisions, which they announced at a town hall meeting April 14.

They have had to prioritize academic centers and several operational factors such as personnel and technology services.

This prioritization is unpopular and was met with hostility from students, employees and professors alike who were all disheartened to learn their respective departments were lower on the priority list than they had hoped.

Peoples' initial reaction to the cuts are understandable. Many cannot seem to grasp what their department has done to merit being placed among the lowest in FIU's list of priorities.

It's OK to be upset with these decisions, but realize that you are reacting on emotion, rightfully so.

"My understanding is that initially, the school was supposed to receive a substantial budget reduction; however, there has been a push by the provost to eradicate the school of mass communication.

Sir, all I have to tell you is: how dare you?" said Roberto Moreno, an impassioned and well-intentioned SJMC student present at the meeting.

The fact of the matter is that the administration is not making these cuts because it wants to, it is making them because it has to. And because it is the nature of tough decisions, not everyone is going to be happy with the outcome.

The University has developed a set of criteria to base its decision on. The University bases ranking of departments on several factors. Those departments that are among the top priority for the University, levels one

and two, are those that are either essential to the core curriculum or have "a high mission alignment."

Those departments ranked lower by the administration have "less mission alignment," access to alternative funding to offset the cuts or centers and institutes which do not produce a sufficient return on investment.

Being classified as a Carnegie Research I institution, the University is expected to publish a certain number of scholarly articles. When articles are published, the University not only accrues prestige but receives grants and alternative funding which is both a return on investment and is in line with the University's institutional mission, which lists research as a top priority.

Those programs which not only fail to publish regularly, but also have numerous, high-cost degree programs with few students are departments which have been considered a low priority.

Though these departments have not been held to such high publishing standards in the past, in a time when the University must decide which departments it considers a high priority, those departments which have been yielding an adequate return on investment can understandably be placed in a higher tier.

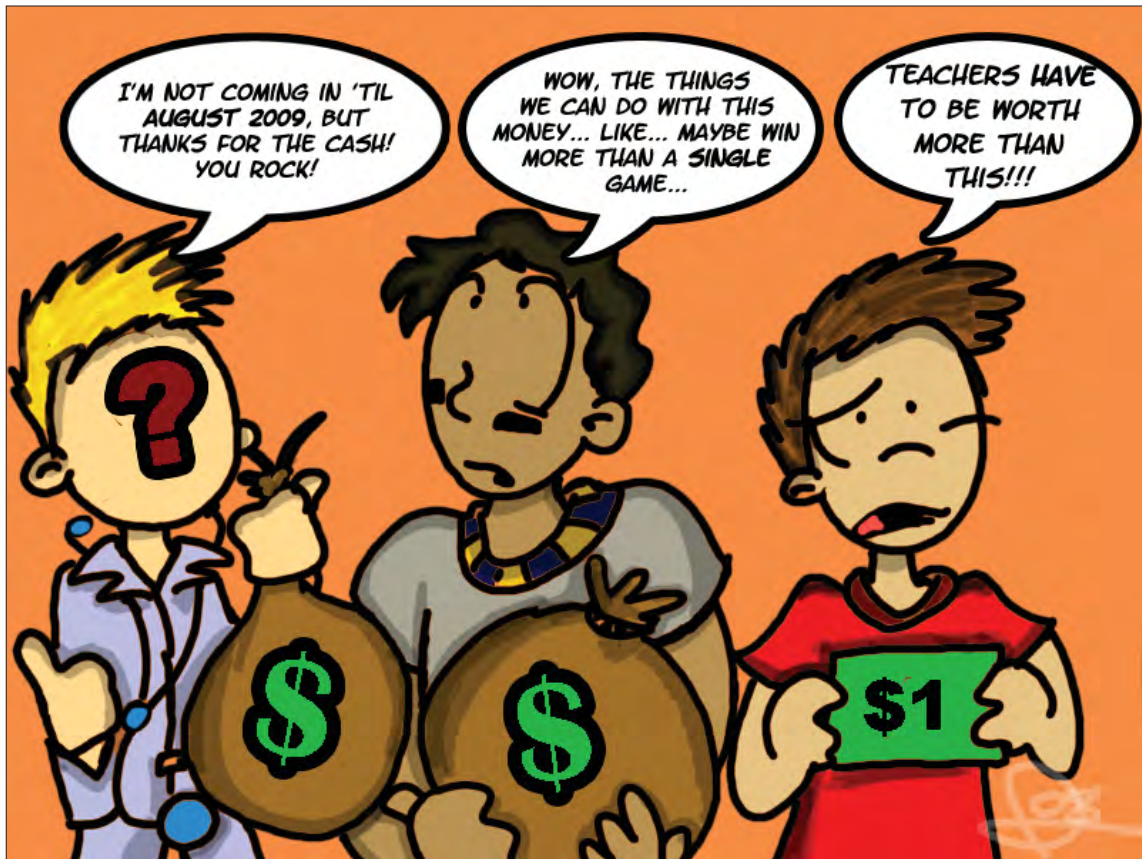
Students do not, nor can they be expected to understand such things as they are completely out of their control.

Cutting every program equally may have been the fair and easy way out, but not the best for the future of FIU. It's easy to blame University officials for coming up with a strategy to try and minimize the harm the budget cuts are inflicting on FIU.

We must realize that they are working with limited resources and trying to minimize the damage the budget crisis has already done.

It's OK to disagree with the criteria the University is using to make its decisions, but this is the reality we face.

DOUBLE WHAMMY



Blinded by the injustices

BEN F. BADGER JR.
Asst. News Director

During a town hall meeting, University President Modesto Maidique announced FIU's funding priorities. Right at the top is Athletics and the College of Medicine.

Not a big surprise to see these areas at the top. However, the decision to put several colleges, schools and programs at the bottom of the barrel was a huge one.

When I found out that the College of Education was being lowered in priority, it felt like one of my eyes was just poked out, as I'm majoring in education.

As if that were not bad enough, FIU just had to blind me when it decided to lower the School of Journalism and Mass Communications as well, lumping the SJMC into "niche" programs.

The University does not have its priorities straight. For starters the College of Education has produced over 16,000 educators since it opened. Those educators have spread throughout the country, but most of them teach right in our own backyard in South Florida.

According to Marty Medina, director of academic administration for the College of Education, the school had 2,347 students registered in Fall 2007 and an average of 2,789 students per semester since 2003.

Clearly the college serves a large number of FIU students and more importantly, the commu-

nity. Not only will the majority of those students go on to teach in Florida, but in the mean time they help shell out thousands of dollars worth of volunteer service.

Every education student has to volunteer at local public schools as part of their course load. The college produces roughly \$200,000 worth of volunteer service in just one semester

It's sad that the University is taking the same stance with educators as the rest of the country; overwork, underpay,

team it will turn a profit. At least this is what Athletics Director Pete Garcia and Maidique have hinted at many times in various public forums.

This logic is discredited as a complete myth, according to research by Robert H. Frank, a Henrietta Johnson Louis professor of management and professor of economics at Cornell University (which can be found at knightfoundation.org).

According to his research published in 2004, the success of a University's athletic program

"does not meaningfully increase either the amount of alumni donations nor the quality of a college's student applicants."

Essentially, the article also states that the most a winning football team could do for its university is slightly

increase the number of average students (based on SAT scores) who apply to the university.

Given our enrollment caps next year, means that even if we had a winning football team, it would not do FIU any good.

Cutting back a little on Athletics would not hurt either.

"The empirical literature provides not a shred of evidence to suggest that an across-the-board cutback in spending on athletics would reduce either donations by alumni or applications by prospective students," Frank said in his research.

For sports fans it's a hard truth to hear, but football or any sport for that matter helps

“When I found out that the College of Education was being lowered in priority, it felt like one of my eyes was just poked out.”

under appreciate and now under fund them.

An institution that serves the community to this extent should not be moved to the lowest level of importance. Not when the over-funded and over-glorified Athletics remains at the top.

Athletics already received a fee increase that I think it should not have gotten. In 2007, it lost 12 athletic scholarships because it was not properly managing its students.

And then there's the football team. The same team FIU puts so much stock in, is the worst team in Division I-A football, only garnering one win out of its last 24 games.

But the logic is that if the University has a great football

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you think the University has its priorities straight?

- Yes - The University is dealing with the budget deficit in a fair and efficient manner.
- No - The wrong colleges, programs and centers are being affected.

Cast your vote at www.fiusm.com

Putting a halt on expansion might help

EDUCATION, page 4

no one in society, but its all about the “prestige” according to Maidique.

If prestige is something the University wants so badly, why would it consider putting the SJMC at the bottom of its priorities?

As it stands it is one of the only six schools of journalism in the state that is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

Overall there are only 110 programs accredited by the ACEJMC in the country.

It has produced successful graduates such as Liz Balmaseda, Manny Garcia, Eunice Ponce, Mireidy Fernandez, Johnny Diaz and Jasmine Kipalani who have all won Pulitzer Prizes.

While I’m on the subject, they have won more Pulitzers than all the other universities in Florida put together, and Balmaseda and Garcia have each won twice.

But FIU seemingly wants to abandon its already established prestigious colleges to build new ones. Imagine how things would stand if there were no upcoming College of Medicine.

Instead of having to divert funding away from pre-existing institutions on campus, we could use that money to keep everything going without major cutbacks.

I understand that medical school or football stadium funding cannot legally be diverted elsewhere. But could the administration at least not take away possible private donations from deserving schools?

The SJMC tried to solicit a donation from Univision, a Span-

Healthcare blamed for cuts’ impact

CABRAL, page 1

aid program.

Of course the ballooning cost-care programs have contributed in part to the current budget shortfall, but President Maidique’s overly simplistic explanation for the budget disaster our state is currently facing leaves far too many people off the hook. In fact, the primary reason our state is in the bind boils down to one critical factor – and it is not Medicaid.

The primary reason, that most defenders of the cuts cite, is a decline in sales tax revenue due to the recent economic downturn. As *The New York Times* noted on March 17 of this year:

“Florida has seen its sales tax revenue decline for two straight fiscal years, the first time officials there recall that happening, as a result of a collapsing housing market that has homeowners spending less.

The state, which has no income tax, relies heavily on sales taxes for its state programs.”

It is the economic climate itself that is at fault, not the “secular force” Maidique seems so eager to blame.

Yet for some odd reason, Maidique seemed to cast these health care programs as the reason for the cuts.

He reserved no criticism for Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio, the Speaker of the State House, who not only approves of these massive cuts but says this budget will leave Floridians “better off.”

“It’s the kind of budget the people of Florida need at a time like this,” Rubio said, in an interview with *the Palm Beach Post* on March 31 of this year.

The students who attend the

ish television station, but were told no because FIU already hit them up for funding for the new stadium.

And let’s not forget last year when Maidique lost \$40 million worth of donations for the College of Medicine when

he “upset” the donor, Herbert Wertheim, namesake of FIU’s performing arts center.

While it’s wise for any university to invest in their future students, we are faced with a budget crisis right now and money needs to be focused on the

vital programs already in place.

The only alternative is to stop expansion. Why can’t FIU wait a few years to start the medical school or expand the Athletics department so that other areas do not have to suffer?

Budgets have not been slashed

and not a word of criticism was uttered for those in Tallahassee preparing to give final approval to these cuts.

To borrow a phrase used by Chief Financial Officer Vivian Sanchez multiple times during the meeting, it must be nice to “live in a world” like the one described by this school’s administration – a world where shutting down schools constitutes an “evolution,” a lost job is an “opportunity” and the “friends” of FIU in Tallahassee bear no responsibility for the horrific consequences of budget cuts they’ve created.

Chris Cabral can be reached at chris.cabral@fusm.com



VICTORIA LYNCH/THE BEACON

IN LABOR: Students to save the Labor Center hold a banner in support of the center. As part of the plan to ease the effects of the expected budget cuts, the center will lose 50 percent funding.

School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the School of Arts and Architecture, who may see their schools disbanded as a result of these cuts, would disagree.

So will as many as 200 faculty members who stand to lose their jobs.

Yet President Maidique, who deserves credit for taking questions from many irate students, heaped praise on Rubio, speaking of his “great efforts” on the issue of education funding.

Perhaps he has done good things for FIU in years past, and I’ve been told that the cuts to FIU are less severe than to other universities.

Many of his defenders describe him as an honorable

man. Nevertheless, someone who has pushed for a \$2 billion cut to education that will likely result in the loss of thousands of jobs and the elimination of hundreds of higher education programs across the state should not be praised by the president of our university.

In fact, there was a bizarre, deceptively upbeat quality to Maidique’s remarks.

Maidique, and the massive PowerPoint slides projected behind him, described the changes to FIU (as a result of the cuts) as an “evolution,” as if to imply these changes constitute some sort of progress.

The potential elimination of jobs and programs were called “restructuring opportunities,”

CAMPUS TALK

What were your reactions to Monday’s town hall meeting?



Paul Ashe
Sophomore

“It’s been great to see so many students come out and support their degree programs and provide insight to the administration.”



Roberto Moreno
Senior

“Students should be encouraged to come to all of the budget hearings.”



Marbely Hernandez
Senior

“This was a great opportunity for students to show the administration how important these changes are to us and what their decisions mean to our future.”



Marianna Castro
Junior

“I didn’t expect the reaction from the students toward the speakers and vice versa.”



Jane Daugherty
SJMC Faculty

“Journalism students showed up and exercised their freedom of expression in a creative and positive way.”



Dorothe Lagerre
Junior

“It’s pretty messed up. They’re taking money away from our education and putting it into sports and investing in Athletics. It’s not like they’re winning games.”

Summer-ready vacation spots right in our backyard

SUSANA RODRIGUEZ
 Asst. News Director

It's time to throw down your books, toss your pens in the air and rip your schedules into confetti - summer is finally here! Are you so excited that you have no clue what you're going to do with your new found freedom? Well, grab a few friends and take a geeky road trip through your home state. Florida is so chockfull of strange places to visit, you'll be able to satisfy the most eclectic of tastes.

Start your engines and aim for the southernmost point to take a haunted tour of Key West. Featured on the shows "America's Most Haunted Places" and "Weird Travels," Ghost Tours of Key West will take you on a 90-minute, half-mile walking tour of the creepiest places in historic Old Town.

For \$15, tours begin at 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., visiting places like Captain Tony's

Saloon, the state's oldest bar which was once an icehouse and city morgue, and the Banyan Resort whose former owner, Mr. Cosgrove, still walks its halls. Not up for a spooky nighttime walk? Instead, stroll through the city cemetery in the daytime. Located at 701 Passover Lane, the Key West cemetery is home to memorable epitaphs such as "I told you I was sick" and "at least I know where he's sleeping tonight."

If you want to know your future, drive up to Cassadaga - the self named "psychic capital of the world." Located north of Deltona, Cassadaga was founded in 1875 by New Yorker George Colby. Colby followed his spirit guide down to Seneca, now our modern day Volusia County, and started the spiritualist camp.

Today, Cassadaga is home to more than 47 mediums who offer services ranging from tarot readings and aura photography, to spiritual heal-

ings and seances. While there, you can even take classes in mediumship, intuitive development and self-realization to connect with the spirit world. Visit www.cassadaga.org for more information.

Want to see mermaids? Zip over to Spring Hill to see some perform in an underwater, synchronized ballet at Weeki Wachee Springs. In business since 1947, Weeki Wachee's mermaids perform themed shows such as "The Little Mermaid" and "Fish Tails," daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for \$24.95.

These sirens have managed to ensnare a visit from Elvis himself, and have had Brit pop band, Supergrass, shoot their video for "Low C" on location. You can visit them online at www.weeki-wachee.com.

If there's one thing cooler than mermaids, it's dinosaurs. Dinosaur World in Plant City is home to more than 150 life-sized dinosaur models and

skeletons. Just an hour west of Orlando, a visit lets you unleash your inner paleontologist to carry out some "field work" by digging in the park's fossil dig and boneyard.

With the \$12.95 entry fee, you even have access to the park's museum where you can ogle dinosaur eggs and raptor claws. Go ahead and drool away - at last you can live out those "Jurassic Park" fantasies with abandon! Park details can be found at www.dinoworld.net.

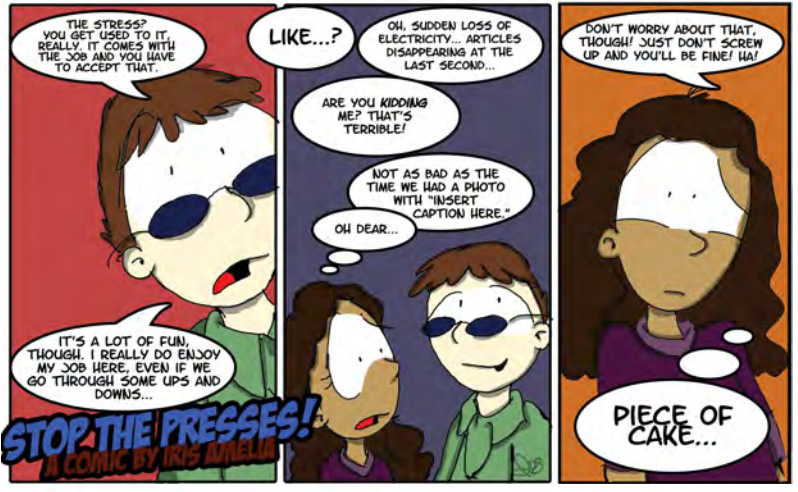
While all this awesome can be overwhelming, don't forget to mail some postcards back home to family and friends at the smallest post office in the U.S. The Ochopee Post Office is a roomy seven-by-eight feet in size and sits at the edge of the Everglades on U.S. 41.

Pre-stamped postcards are already waiting for you on the counter top, so don't keep them holding out for long - get in your car and start road-tripping today.



Diversions

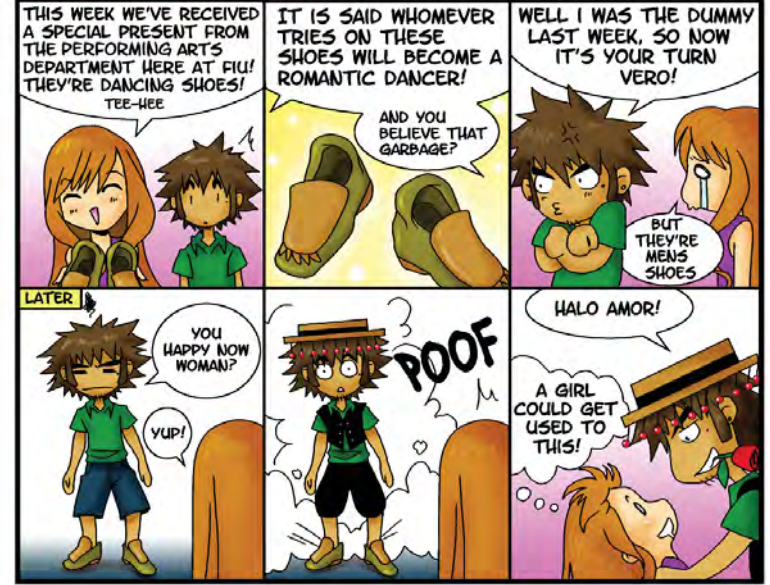
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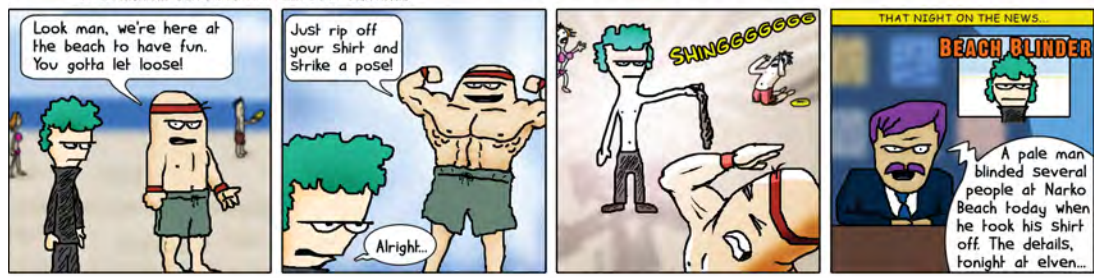
MY AMY BY LUIS NIN



TEST DUMMIES By: Veronica Fernandez



HAIRY DAN AND ACTIVE DAVE #11 - HAIRY DAN NEEDS A TAN



College gossip finds new home at Juicy Campus

**KASSANDRA POOL
DANIEL GARCIA**
Beacon Staff

In our tech savvy world it seems that everyday there is a new Web site vying for the public's attention. Some last, such as Myspace, and others wane over time - who visits *Bored.com* anymore? The latest in this chase for brain space is *www.JuicyCampus.com*, a Web site that dishes the dirt on campus life across the nation.

The site was created with the intention of giving students a place to share their interesting campus stories.

"Thinking back to my college years, there were always crazy hilarious things that were happening. Why not give people a place to share these stories?" said founder and CEO Matt Ivester.

The Web site, which is owned by Lime Blue, a Nevada LLC, was founded on Aug. 1, 2007 with the mission of enabling online anonymous free speech on college campuses.

The site allows students to select their school and

category depending on the student's subject. Students can write about faculty, administration, Greek organizations, sports/athletes, spring break, students or even things they overhear on campus.

Ivester's goal is for the site to expand across the country to different campuses all over the states. Currently some of the schools listed are Columbia University, University of Miami, University of Florida and University of California Los Angeles.

The site has been the subject of much controversy, with CNN noting that it "has proved so poisonous there are signs of a backlash."

Stanford University forced a similar Web site to shut down almost a year ago. On Dec. 9, 2007, Carlos Huerta was arrested at Loyola Marymount University for criminal threats he allegedly posted on the site. He was released the following day on bail that had been set at \$100,000.

A student from Colgate University was also arrested for making similar threats.

Even though the site is anonymous there is a way to track down who wrote what, but it can only be done by an internet specialist with a warrant.

Although FIU is not listed among these schools the site allows anyone to suggest a school as long as an e-mail address is provided.

The site is user generated, since at the end of the day it is the students who are writing about their campus. FIU College of Law Assistant Professor Cyra Akila Choudhury said that it would be nice for students to exercise restraint when posting on the site.

"Everyone has the right to express their own opinions, but it depends on how the person expresses their opinion and if they do it appropriately," Choudhury said.

Nursing student and sophomore Dena Jette felt that her reputation might be tarnished if FIU was on the Web site.

"I wouldn't want to see FIU on the web site because I wouldn't want my classmates speaking bad about

me," she said. Whether it is to vent or simply see what other

students have to say about their campus, *JuicyCampus.com* is certainly a good way

for students to say what's on their mind about their university.

ENCORE



FERNANDO GARCIA/THE BEACON

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS: Joseph "Onkore" Hernandez headlines at the CD release party of "All Rights Reserved" on April 11, 2008 held at Flavour. The CD was produced entirely by Professor Oswaldo Rossi's music business class.



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BASEBALL SERIES: MTSU 3, FIU 0

POOR HOME OUTING



VICTORIA LYNCH/THE BEACON

COLLISION: Junior catcher Steven Stropp gets called out on a meeting at the plate with Middle Tennessee State's Tyler Acker. The Golden Panthers are now second to last in the Sun-Belt conference standings.

Postseason hopes growing thin after sweep

LUCA MESSINA
Staff Writer

The Golden Panthers baseball team was swept at University Park on April 11-13 by the Middle Tennessee State. The Golden Panthers' postseason aspirations are now in serious jeopardy.

FIU (12-26, 5-10 Sun Belt Conference) led at one point in each of the three games but was unable to come away with a victory.

The team has now lost six consecutive conference games and this is the second consecutive series that they have been swept.

MTSU 7, FIU 3

Senior Steven Stewart (0-5) was given another opportunity to start after losing his turn in the previous weekend series and struggled from the start.

His shaky performance was not as the Golden Panthers committed five errors.

The one-run lead quickly evaporated in the following inning as MTSU put up three more runs, with the help of three FIU errors, in the top of the second inning to go up 4-2.

The Blue Raiders put two more runs in the third inning and one in the sixth before finally going on to win by a 7-3 score.

Kenneth Roberts (4-2) picked up the win while Langdon Stanley recorded his second save for Middle Tennessee.

"We gave a lot of effort and tried hard we just got to be able to hit the baseball better," said coach Turtle Thomas. "Steven is a little bit down on himself, and he's got to start to pick it up and pitch more like Steven Stewart's ability. He's got great ability. In fact, he's got more ability than any pitcher on our staff."

MTSU 9, FIU 7 (10 INNINGS)

The Golden Panthers responded to a lackluster offensive performance by putting up seven runs but ultimately fell to

and only one out.

Chris Allen started for FIU after serving his two-game suspension after hitting a batter in the previous series against Western Kentucky.

He lasted only 1.1 innings before being replaced in favor of James Lajiness. He allowed six hits, three earned runs and didn't have a walk or a strikeout.

"It's a very tough loss," Thomas said. "As a matter of fact, we had a lot of good performances today. There were a lot of clutch performances on our part and I was very proud of how they played today."

MTSU 11, FIU 8 (10 INNINGS)

FIU dropped the final game of the series in 10th inning again as the Blue Raiders completed the three-game sweep.

Sophomore lefty Corey Polizzano started for the Golden Panthers and left with a comfortable 6-2 lead.

"I did OK. I mean, I didn't have my stuff, but I just tried to throw strikes and make them get outs themselves," Polizzano said. "They just made little dinkers that found the holes and scored some runs."

After tying the game in the eighth inning, FIU pitcher Carlos Martinez (1-1) struggled and loaded the bases with two outs. Pitching Coach Felipe Suarez opted to make a change and summoned Steve Stewart to try and get the Golden Panthers out of the jam.

On a 3-1 count, MTSU third baseman Zach Barret lifted a fly ball that was just out of the reach of FIU centerfielder Ty Main.

The hit scored three runs and the Blue Raiders added two more on a two-run home run by first basemen Rawley Bishop.

Jorge Castillo added a two-run home run to right field to cut the score to 11-8 but that was all the Golden Panthers could muster. Tyler Hyde picked up the win for MTSU and Chad Edwards recorded the save.

BASEBALL NOTEBOOK

Infielder finds his stroke at the plate

LUCA MESSINA
Staff Writer

Home runs and RBI are two of the most glorified offensive statistics, so FIU's starting second basemen Ryan Mollica performances this season have been quite underrated.

Currently on a 21-game hitting streak, Mollica has rebounded from a season-ending elbow injury that limited him to just seven games last year. Besides making some nifty plays in the field, he has come up with several timely hits this season.

"Coach Turtle [Thomas] worked with me a lot in the Fall and Spring, so I feel good, and I'm swinging the bat well," Mollica said. "But it's not an individual sport as coach tells us."

After his performance in the April 11-13 series against Middle Tennessee, he currently ranks second in batting average behind senior Jorge Castillo, posting .377 average with one homerun and 26 RBI. He also has 46 hits and has scored 27 times.

In the field, he has a .953 fielding percentage to go along with eight errors and has started 30 of the 38 games played. Despite his lengthy hitting streak, Mollica tries not to think about it when he steps up to the plate.

"I just feel good at the plate, and I'm honestly just trying to get a hit every at-bat for the team," he said. "I'm not worried about the hitting streak. I'd just rather win some games."

His most recent clutch performance came in the second game of the three game set against MTSU. With the Golden Panthers trailing 7-6 in the bottom of the ninth inning and runners on first and second, Ryan delivered a timely single to right field that was good enough to score pinch runner Chris Altieri and tie the game.

"I knew that I had to come through, because we hadn't been coming through and it was up to me," Mollica said. "I just calmed myself down and put a good swing on it." He finished this series hitting 6-for-11 with three RBI and three runs scored.

Mollica's contributions surely have caught the eyes of the coaching staff and his return next year as a senior will surely be something to look forward to.

Up- Next The Golden Panthers will look to improve upon their 5-10 Sun Belt Conference record as they go on the road to face New Orleans in a three-game set April 18-20.

“Turtle Thomas, coach

We gave a lot of effort and tried hard we just got to be able to hit the baseball better.

"I felt good, just a couple balls didn't bounce my way, and we kind of dug ourselves into a hole because of those errors," Stewart said. "I just have to keep the ball down more and be more mentally focused on the whole game instead of letting a couple of errors get into my head. That's been my main problem."

After allowing a solo home run to Blue Raider leadoff hitter Nathan Hines to put FIU down 1-0, sophomore Tyler Townsend hit a two-run blast off of the scoreboard in left centerfield to put the Golden Panthers up 2-1.

the Blue Raiders in the 10th inning after MTSU shortstop Tyler Burnett delivered what would be the game winning two-run home run off of FIU reliever Jorge Marban (0-2).

FIU showed much resiliency by tying up the score 7-7 in the bottom of the ninth inning after Ryan Mollica singled home pinch runner Chris Altieri.

The Golden Panthers went into the inning trailing 7-6. Senior Jorge Castillo had an opportunity to win the game for FIU but grounded into an inning-ending double play with runners on the corners