Chat answers students’ concerns

Students can now kiss the hassle of enrollment goodbye. Since November of 2006, the Enrollment Services at FIU has been hosting an online chat service, named Panther Chat, for those in need of on-spot financial, admissions or registration aid.

“Holding on the telephone and making inconvenient, long lines are a thing of the past,” said Marco Gomez, business analyst for Enrollment Services, in the Panther Chat press release.

Now help is only a click away with the new Panther Chat, an online customer service for students. By visiting the MyFIU portal online, students have access to live chats with enrollment service staff members in regards to financial aid, admissions and registration.

“It was going to happen eventually. Almost everything is online now and I am glad FIU has joined in on that trend. It makes things a lot easier,” said Megan Rojas, a freshman and Panther Chat user.

The hours of Panther Chat vary depending on department. The financial aid and registration chat is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and admissions between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. After hours, students will be able to leave a cyber message for representatives who will respond to their questions within 24 hours. Students may also receive a transcript of their chat with the Enrollment Services staff member for future reference.

The idea of Panther Chat was first conceived in July of 2006. Enrollment Services used focus groups, a collection of students who expressed their opinions on specific academic ideas, to form this new service.
**THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS**

**MONDAY • MARCH 5**

SPC American Heritage Opening Ceremonies “A Trip back to the 50’s”: 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

SPC “Rock Around the Clock” Karaoke Night: 7 p.m., Porter Davis Game Room (UP)

Panther Rage Meeting: 4 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

“Culture of the Middle East” Lecture: 6:30 p.m., GC 243 (UP)

SPC Women’s Health Fair: 11 a.m., WUC Panther Square (BBC)

**TUESDAY • MARCH 6**

SPC Coffee House (with performances by Giel & Carlos Beronatti): 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

American Identity Head to Head Challenge: 6 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

SPC General Meeting: 5:30 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

SOG General Meeting: 5 p.m., GC 150 (UP)

“Baraka” Lecture: 7 p.m., GC Panther Suite (UP)

**WEDNESDAY • MARCH 7**

SPC American Heritage presents Family Feud: 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

SGA General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

SPC Women’s Celebration – Safe Sex Talk with FIU: 6 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

**THURSDAY • MARCH 8**

SPC presents Line Dancing (with Boogie Man George): 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

Greek Awards: 7 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

Big Gurl Fashion Show: 8 p.m., WUC Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre (BBC)

International Students Club presents Game Night: 1 p.m., WUC Panther Square (BBC)

**FRIDAY • MARCH 9**

SPC Films presents “Happy Feet”: 7 p.m. & 10 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

FIU Lecture Series – Acoustical Astronomy: 8 p.m., CP 145 (UP)

LOL Comedy Series “All Women Edition”: 8 p.m., WUC Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre (BBC)

-Compiled by Reuben Pereira

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**Panther chat solves concerns**

 Leafs and sunflowers and a new weight loss class offered at FIU that combines dances such as salsa and belly dancing with aerobics.

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**ZUMBA!**

**HIPS DON’T LIE:** Students dance and exercise to zumba March 1 in the Graham Center Pit. Zumba is a new weight loss class offered at FIU that combines dances such as salsa and belly dancing with aerobics.

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**SGC-UP Notes**

Feb. 28 Call to order: 3:43 p.m., Adjournment: 5:23 p.m.

President’s Report (Alfonso “Alfie” Leon):
- Special presentation by Governmental Relations office to prepare students for FIU Day.
- Florida Crystals recently gave $1 million grant to applied research for alternative fuels.
- SPC American Heritage Opening Ceremonies “A Trip back to the 50’s”.
- SPC “Rock Around the Clock” Karaoke Night.
- Panther Rage Meeting.
- “Culture of the Middle East” Lecture.
- SPC Women’s Health Fair.

Speaker of the House’s Report (Rocio Perez):
- No council meeting next week. House meeting March 5 to discuss legislation changes.
- Student Services (Gretel Hebbert):
- Meeting with Felicia Townsend regarding beverage bids. They are currently in Phase 1. Request for vendors document came back from legal.
- Budget deliberation date was supposed to be March 15. New tentative date will be March 10.
- Charlie Andrews: BBC has decided to extend their deadline for a week. Their applications are due March 15.

Chief of Cabinet’s Report (Larissa Lockett):
- White House officials March 13 and 14 in GC Ballrooms.

Elections Board (Judee Talloch):
- Applications are due March 9 at 5 p.m.
- Appropriation A07-04 for $800 for invitations and cake to redesign GC 140 and 150.
- Charlie Andrews: BBC has decided to extend their deadline for a week. Their applications are due March 15.

SGC-UP Notes

- Meeting with Victor Citerella from facilities management for outdoor outlets on March 2.
- Budget deliberation date was supposed to be March 15. New tentative date will be March 10.
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- Meeting with Victor Citerella from facilities management for outdoor outlets on March 2.

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**Student Health Advisory (Rebecca Linaudor):**
- The Health forum was Feb. 27. It was more of a discussion. The clinic hours were reduced by two hours because they did not receive as much money as they thought they were going to get from the fee increase. They have established a partnership with Baptist satellite hospitals with some sort of discount.
- Student Services (Gretel Hebbert):
- Meeting with Felicia Townsend regarding beverage bids. They are currently in Phase 1. Request for vendors document came back from legal.
- Budget deliberation date was supposed to be March 15. New tentative date will be March 10.
- Charlie Andrews: BBC has decided to extend their deadline for a week. Their applications are due March 15.

New Business (aye-nay-abstain):
- Appropriation A07-04 for $800 for invitations and refreshments for the School of Architecture’s two Gallery Nights (8-0-3).
- A.J. Meyer (At-large): I just want to ask again that we get these appropriations before the meeting if possible.
- Appropriation A07-05 for $2,000 for food, speakers and rainbow tassels for Stonewall Pride Alliance Spring LGBT Awareness Program Day (6-0-5).
- Approval of the revised elections code passes.

Absences:
- Jennifer Ruiz (At-large), Mikana Maeda (Architecture), Brian Andino (CHUA)

Announcements:
- 10 people attended Feb. 28 safety forum. Chief Bill King gave a great discussion.

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New Information Technology chief hired to boost campus wireless service

YOLANNE ALMANZAR
Contributing Writer

Min Yao never planned to be known as the “IT guy,” but now, as the new vice president and chief information officer for the division of information technology, one of his goals is to make FIU a wireless campus.

“I want to be known as the IT guy who works for students’ needs,” Yao said.

In recent years, University officials have found that wireless connection on campus is among the top students’ needs and Yao—who’s been here a little over six weeks—believes that students should be the priority.

Yao’s position makes him responsible for all of the University’s technology services, including PanterSoft, the IT security office and media services in the classroom. He is currently working with the University to install an additional 200 wireless access points, focused on the largest classrooms on campus and test new software himself.

“I often wonder why people pay for students to set up a campus-wide wireless network at California State University, Dominguez Hills, where he was the chief information technology officer and associate vice president of information technology. That particular project took Yao and the group eight months to complete.

Yao has been working in the field of information technology for more than 10 years but he was initially interested in studying bilingual memory storage. With a master’s degree in applied linguistics and a doctorate degree in educational administration, he began work as the Coordinator of Institutional Research at Vancouver Community College in British Columbia, August 1990.

But it wasn’t until frustration over the computers at an old office job that he realized his expertise lay in computer technology. It was at this office—where employees still depended on printing from a mainframe located outside the office—that he decided to install a new computer system that linked personal computers together. The new set up allowed office employees to print from a local printer.

Yao smiles as he remembers the accidental discovery and says that he never feels tired when he’s working with computers. He likes to read journals on the latest technology after work and test new software himself.

“Sometimes people pay me to do what I love to do,” he said.

Bond attributes Yao’s success to his ability to internalize data and make conclusions.

“He impressed us during his interview because he was a tremendous researcher. He just understood our vision because he was a tremendous analyst,” Bond said.

Yao says President Modest A. Maidique’s clear vision to make FIU an academic institution is what attracted him most to the school.

Yao is working on enhancing classroom technology, such as the installation of speakers, screens and connections to the Internet. The goal is to have all classrooms fully equipped in five to six years.

We got the sense that he was going to partner with everybody, especially students and faculty, when finding the solution to a problem.

James Bond, Chair of the Search and Screen Committee

YOLANNE ALMANZAR
Contributing Writer

NEWSFLASH

Former FIU academics get maximum sentences

Convicted ex-FIU academics Carlos and Elsa Alvarez apologized Feb. 27 for the secret life they led as informants on Miami’s exile community for Cuba.

U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore slammed Carlos Alvarez with the maximum five-year prison sentence for conspiring to act as an unregistered Cuban agent and Elsa Alvarez with the maximum three years’ imprisonment for harboring her husband’s illicit intelligence work and failing to report it to authorities.

The sentences marked the closing chapter to the Alvaraz’s life as once-accomplished Cuban exiles.

FIU administrators, students head to Tallahassee

University President Modesto A. Maidique, members of the FIU Board of Trustees and a delegation of more than 20 student representatives are heading to the sixth annual FIU Day in Tallahassee March 7-8.

One of the goals of the annual meeting is to discuss upcoming events and developments in the University. In addition, the FIU delegation will be lobbying state legislators for University funds.

For more information visit the FIU Governmental Relations web site.

- Compiled by C. Joel Marino and Yesenia Forte

CORRECTIONS

In the March 1 issue, the article titled “Sharpton promises leaders students he’ll visit shantytown” should have attributed the quote, “When there are fights like these, we would hope black leaders would help” to Chris Daley.

In the same issue, the article titled “Maidique does the time warp” should have been credited to contributing writer Jose Martinez.

In the story titled “Patrons party at annual fest,” The Beacon could not provide evidence that there was a mostly drunken crowd as was reported.

The Beacon will gladly change any errors. Call our UP office at 305-348-2709 or BBC at 305-919-4722.
Enrollment, building renovations top priorities

**BUDGET, page 1**

...ments, it seems that the budget proposal’s main priority is enrollment growth. The BOG approved $148.3 million to bring to an... budget, listing what he feels each public university should receive.

The state legislature then takes both budgets into consideration and allocated funds based on this comparison.

“The legislature controls the purse strings, they control the money. That’s why it’s important to get our name out there, so they know not just what we want, but what we represent,” Sauls said.

Students, faculty and administrators will be traveling to Tallahassee March 7 and 8 to lobby legislators during “FIU Day,” an annual trip that usually takes place at the start of the sessions.

**UP vendors feel at home**

VENDORS, page 1

Ribbonet said, “The governor also drafts his own version is then presented to the BOG for...works, though this issue is tied to a $10 technology fee for all public university students proposed by the BOG.

Legislative sessions will run until May 4. Each institution’s Board of Trustees must approve preliminary budgets. This version is then presented to the BOG for recommendations.

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**Panther Chat**

**BARRY UNIVERSITY**

**ENROLLMENT, BUILDING RENOVATIONS TOP PRIORITIES**

**UP vendors feel at home**

**Prepare Yourself for a future in public health**

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**Panther Chat**

**BARRY UNIVERSITY**
**WHAT’S THE DISH?**

MEAL DEALS: Students, faculty and members of the Aromark company got together twice last Thursday to discuss up and coming changes to the dining facilities at the Biscayne Bay Campus. Students gave their opinions as to the type of food they prefer.

**READ OUR STORY MARCH 8 FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN DINING.**

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**SGC-BBC Notes**

**President's Report** (Camilo Silva)
- Students running for SGA cabinet positions: the SGA president is the only one who can appoint the cabinet positions, but the executive board can advise the president on his appointments. New members include: Melanie Hodge, Elections Commissioner; Kinessa Reid, Clerk of Council; Verna Green, Internal/External Affairs Director; Daniel Macadar, Community Relations And Environmental Affairs Director.

**Guest Speakers**
- Noel Guerrero, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Internship opportunities available to all FIU students in Washington, D.C.

**Old Business**
- Vote to appoint Rene Portolés as SGA Graduate Student Representative. Aye-nay-abstain: 6-1-0

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**Traveling exhibit showcases African-American history**

ALEXANDRA MCANARNEY  
Staff Writer

Sankofa is an African word that refers to the reclamation of one’s past in order to move forward. “It’s been a challenge getting her here. We would like her to be at a fixed location for three days, but having her at the University is a privilege,” said Robert Coatie, senior director for Multicultural Programs and Services, referring to the museum.

The items chronicled African-American history, beginning with slavery, through the cotton trade and going through World War II and the Civil Rights movement.

Included among the display pieces are two hand crafted quilts from South Carolina commissioned by Jennings. The quilts are maps detailing the route used by escaped slaves to follow north into Canada or south into Florida to be helped by Native Americans.

On the quilt, it tells you that when you’re thirsty to search the sky for flying geese because they’ll lead you to water. A bear paw and a monkey wrench lead you in different directions, and North, South, East and West are stitched on to the quilt,” Jennings said.

Akin Ogundiran, director of African New World Studies, said he believes this display de-emphasizes modern day materialism.

“Things were less materialistic. Common, hand made things were of great importance. These are small artifacts that carry with them historical significance with the meaning they held to the person that made them,” he said.

Other artifacts include hand crafted materials that hold significant historical value, such as Civil War memorabilia and plaques commemorating the Tuskegee Airmen, the first all-black air squadron put together during WWII.

“Jennings] made the wise decision of coming in the winter months, because up north is all snow and her things would probably be damaged,” Coatie said.

First edition copies on books on the subject of slavery were also found on tables within the display with titles such as *Holocaust for Beginners* by S.E. Anderson and the cover shot of a Ku Klux Klan dragon and his daughter in Klan attire.

“When there is a lecture, time must be given to it, but here students can just walk by and have some historical contact,” Coatie said.

FIU student Angela Sotolongo agreed.

“People will have better knowledge and won’t call things like that primitive. It’s a way to try to understand a part of the community and try to break barriers.”

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Professor’s methods influenced by philosophers, Star Trek

LAINDA DE LA FUENTE  
Staff Writer

Steven Mizraich’s students call him a genius. Yet, for the adjunct professor in the department of sociology and anthropology, it’s all about making a difference.

Mizraich earned his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Florida in 1999 and specialized in anthropology and sociology of science and technology.

Mizraich, a self-proclaimed Star Trek geek, recalls a moment in the saga’s history when the dying Captain Kirk asks fellow Captain Picard why he became a starship captain.

Picard responded that it was because he was in that captain’s chair he could make a difference.

Teaching subjects such as Hallucinogens and Culture (ANT 4461) and Science, Technology and Society (SYP 4421), Mizraich shuffles his passion in much the same way.

“I don’t want people thinking anthropology only studies ‘primitive’ people who live in huts and rainforests or that societies with space shuttles ... must be better ethically, morally or otherwise,” Mizraich said.

According to Mario Fink, one of Mizraich’s students, the professor uses his passion as a means of getting through to his students.

“Sometimes he starts to get emotionally charged, usually concerning various social injustices that exist in this country or the world at large,” Mizraich said.

Mizraich cites John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator, as his biggest influence while teaching.

“Dewey argued that an education is a public good not just because it fills you with useless facts or prepares you for a corporate cubicle, but because it gives you the tools to be an informed, empowered citizen of your republic,” Mizraich said.

A Facebook group titled, “I want to have Mizraich’s babies (even if I’m a man)” reflects student’s wacky appreciation for Mizraich, but he stays grounded, somewhat modest, and even slightly perplexed through all his praise.

“I have not found a cure for any major world disease or solved any global world conflict,” he said. “If people listen to some of my ideas and they take them further, explore nooks and crannies I never thought to myself, mission accomplished.”
Shanty hut should inspire students to help poor

ROGUE CORONA
Staff Writer

Last week’s exhibition of a mock shantytown hut behind the Graham Center at University Park was an excellent way of “bringing a glimpse of poverty,” as Andrew Santa Lucia put it in a Beacon article published Feb. 22, to the student population. The youth of America needs to look beneath the surface of their prosperous country and see those who are in desperate need, because this generation will have the power to assist the less fortunate in the future.

Mohammed Malik, president of Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, commented on the shantytown display. “By seeing this demonstration, people are becoming aware of the issue. That’s why we’re here,” Malik said.

And people do need to become aware of the homelessness issue. The Office on Homelessness and the Florida Coalition for the Homeless estimated that on any given day in 2005, there were 83,391 homeless persons. That accounts for 5 percent of Florida’s population.

Moreover, based on a survey sample, it is estimated that families with minor children make up over 38 percent of the total homeless population, and children under the age of 18 represent 25 percent. But these figures mean nothing to the youth of Florida. As far as they’re concerned, they’re just numbers – nothing more.

That’s why the work of the members of the FIU group A.N.S.W.E.R. and of the Critical Awareness for Social Inequality in Society is so important. They are working to display the problem of homelessness in a more tangible and personal fashion. Their efforts aim to influence the student population’s view of the homeless, which is almost certainly the best way to make a significant impact.

Government grants and care plans, such as the $1.4 billion in funding approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development earlier this month, are a great way to help the homeless; however, such methods of assistance almost never reach the entire homeless population.

The Office of Homelessness reported that in 2005, only 16,332 homeless persons – less than 25 percent of the homeless – were served under grant-funded programs.

Although Miami-Dade County homeless numbers have dropped in recent months, advocates say that the overall demand for resources for the homeless and near-homeless in Miami-Dade is actually on the rise.

What is even more alarming is that, according to The National Coalition for the Homeless, Florida has the highest rate of violence against the homeless. In Fort Lauderdale alone, seven acts of violence against the homeless were reported last year.

While assistance for the homeless is obviously a very important present-day issue, more work must be done to assure the aid and support of the homeless in the future. No doubt, the work of A.N.S.W.E.R. and Critical Awareness for Social Inequality in Society is a great start, but more people must get involved in order to overcome this great challenge.

These demonstrations of shantytowns make a lasting impression in the minds of the youth and give them a personal view of how these unfortunate people live.

Many people may not want to live on the streets scrapping for food and sleeping after night on pavements, but nobody really knows what that’s like until they live it themselves. These displays are the closest way to show the students the reality of the homeless problem that our nation is facing.

Hopefully, one of those students who witnessed the display last week will one day be in a position to make a difference in the community, and by remembering that display they will be moved to take action and lend a helping hand.

The homeless problem will not be solved any time soon, but with our effort, and the aid of those with compassion for the homeless, we can raise awareness and in turn get the message to the world.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bathroom bigots at BBC run amok

I can feel the blood rush to my face every time I think about the evil that assaulted me in the bathroom that day at the Biscayne Bay Campus. Even as I write, I refrain from allowing my hands to make lists of rage, so I continue typing. Anger can often cloud the mind like a heavy fog, and such a handicap is not one I desire to burden myself with. However, a few days ago I was in a bathroom stall in Academic I, doing, well, what people usually do in bathroom stalls (other than flush). Operations went well, I’m glad to report, until I flushed and turned to walk away. It was then that I was confronted with an image scrawled in huge letters on the wall: “**F***JEW**” was the message somebody wished to broadcast to the world, along with two giant swastikas for dramatic effect. This was written in a college restroom, in an institution where race is supposedly non-existent.

There are few symbols in the world that can be as disturbing and stomach turning as the swastika. Its mere presence has caused immense obscenities not only on the face of Jews and minorities, but also in all of those who treasure the values of toleration and equality.

The irony of this is that in Tibet the same symbol is used to represent changelessness and eternity. However, in Western culture it has been forever soiled by its participation as a figurehead of a murderous and evil Nazi regime.

As I stood in the bathroom stall and seethed, my mind was already racing searching for a proper scapegoat to whom I could regurgitate all of this poison onto. It was then that I had a moment of clarity which came in the form of a psychic vision.

I began to picture the poor soul who wrote this while coaxing the swastika to the side of me. I finished all that, then the lights went dim to allow me a moment of privacy.

I questioned if he fears how disgusted his friends and teachers would be if they knew the type of scumbag and malice he keeps inside, if he even knows what a swastika is all about. Did he even fit the cookie cutter image of an Aryan or is he just a wannabe? Maybe we all hold certain prejudices that we feel the need to expose.

I was going to talk about the other Democratic candidate John Edwards, but it turns out that you have to go into rehab if you use the word “F***JEW.”

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I was going to talk about the other Democratic candidate John Edwards, but it turns out that you have to go into rehab if you use the word “F***JEW.”
This letter is regarding the debacle that was the Rev. Al Sharpton presentation on Friday, March 23. I was extremely disappointed to arrive at the Biscayne Bay Campus, after driving for one hour from my home to find Rev. Al Sharpton tucked away in a scarcely lit corner of the campus.

Due to the lack of advertisement on the University Park campus none of my colleagues had heard about Rev. Al Sharpton's appearance and few were present. Worst of all, after dealing with the drive in rush hour traffic jam and I found out that we had just missed the discussion because the program was moved back from 7 p.m. to start at 6:30 pm. I'm not sure why I hadn’t heard about the change. Maybe because tickets were given away haphazardly, with no documentation of students’ ID numbers, leaving no trail to contact students with scheduling changes. An announcement could have been made on the FIU website or a general e-mail sent to students. I don’t know how the information wasn’t made available to everyone.

I should have been nice to actually see such a remarkable and influential speaker whose presentation I was so greatly anticipating. It would have been nice to spend my Friday evening in a rare opportunity with this community leader than driving in circles around the city in rush hour traffic. (The University has) done a great disservice to the students as well as [its] guest, who undoubtedly would have enjoyed the larger reception if students who were crushed to find they had arrived an hour late had been able to welcome and appreciate him as intended.

Please correct me if I’m wrong in my belief that this was a poorly organized, poorly advertised waste of an opportunity.

Courtney Dowdall
Graduate Student
Comparative Sociology

Festival misrepresented

I am appalled that the editor-in-chief of the Beacon characterized the event-goers at our South Beach Wine and Food Festival as “the mostly drunk crowd.”

Future newspaper writers must understand that words have meaning and an impact. It is against the law in the State of Florida to serve individuals who are intoxicated.

Serving intoxicated persons can cost the in personal lines and the loss of the liquor license of the University.

I was at almost every event and attended both grand tastings from before the tents opened until they closed. I did not observe any obviously intoxicated individuals. I did observe thousands of people who were enjoying the sun, sand, food, wine and exhibitions.

I observed many uniformed Miami Beach police who were hired by the festival to assist us in maintaining good order and discipline. There was no one arrested for public intoxication during the entire festival.

The festival was a huge success in bringing not only money to the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Florida International University.

Joseph J. West, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

University fails to serve vets

Republicans fail to serve vets

CHRISTOPHER CABRAL
Opinion Editor

Army specialist George Romero wasn’t happy, and he let The Washington Post know it.

“Hate it,” said Romero of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, a place where many disabled veterans now live. “There are cockroaches...sometimes there’s no heat, no water...I told my platoon sergeant I want to leave...my platoon sergeant said, ‘suck it up’.”

Suck it up. Not much consolation for the disabled veterans of the Iraq war, who have been forced to live in deplorable conditions at what is supposed to be this country’s top veterans hospital.

The story published on the Feb. 18 issue of The Washington Post shed light on a sad aspect of America’s tragic war in Iraq, and reminded us that the Veterans Healthcare program greeted many of those who have returned from service is in shambles.

At first glance, the tragedy of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center may seem like an aberration, an isolated instance of governmental neglect.

When you look closer, a more startling picture emerges. The Republicans, who run the White House, and until recently ran Congress, have a shameful record when it comes to veterans’ issues.

This is ironic. For the past few years, Republicans have been eager to accuse Democrats of not supporting the troops every time they dare utter a critical word about the spiraling disaster that is the Iraq war. Republicans have strived to depict themselves as the party of defense, of the military, and of our courageous fighting men and women serving in Iraq.

Yet, the facts reveal the grim conditions at what is supposed to be the best place for disabled veterans to recover.

The organization Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America examined the voting records of the 109th Congress, which ended in January. The organization graded each member of Congress, and the results were shocking.

The survey showed that 13 members received failing grades, and all were Republicans. Among them was Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, the leader of the Republicans and the House of Representatives until 2007.

Other Organizations were even harsher in their assessment of these “patriotic” Americans. Disabled American Veterans gave each member of Congress a score from zero to 100. The higher the score, the better their grade on the member’s record on veterans’ issues.

At least 170 members who are currently serving in Congress have received a zero. Every single one is a Republican.

Among them are Dennis Hastert, Tom Tancredo and the current House Minority leader John Boehner (R-OH).

All 14 Republicans in the House of Representatives from Florida were among those receiving the lowest score possible.

When they ran congress, they consistently opposed increasing veterans benefits. In March of last year they voted to cut $155 million from the budget for veterans healthcare.

These are the same congressmen that spent $20 million on the infamous “bridge to nowhere” in Alaska.

Sadly, this pattern of Republicans “supporting the troops” in word and not deed exists far beyond the halls of the U.S. Congress.

President Bush’s proposed budget for 2008 has come under fire for requiring veterans to pay as much as $750 to enroll in the Veterans Association healthcare program.

The President is all for sending more troops to Iraq, but the commander in chief thinks the sacrifices that they make don’t merit free healthcare.

At least the President is consistent. He is totally opposed to universal healthcare, even when the principle applies to the veterans of the war he started.

It appears that those who spend so much time wrapping themselves in the flag and declaring their love for the troops are compensating for their own records.

The Walter Reed debacle is merely one symptom of a much larger problem; many of the men and women who run this country support the war in Iraq – not necessarily “the troops.”
For an icy blast of flavor, I grab the New Iced Coffee at McDonald's®. In three great flavors – Vanilla, Hazelnut and Regular. Available anytime of the day so I can always quench my thirst.
CONFIDENTIAL

Center keeps student conduct in check

According to Dlhosh, there are no zero-tolerance policies in effect, but the SCCRC does not take matters of assault, sexual misconduct, stalking or any other serious accusation lightly—punishment will fit the crime. If a student is found guilty of substance abuse, for example, they may be suspended for a semester and have to undergo substance therapy as well.

RESOLUTION, page 11

Dancers overcome injuries, hectic scheduling for squad

An FIU Golden Dazzler passes out on the floor during practice, yet she smiles as she sees one of her teammates help her up while the other dancers continue their routine.

This year’s Golden Dazzlers team—FIU’s only official dance team—is continuing the tradition of aiding and guiding one another through practices, competitions and performances, a tradition that began in 1989.

Their identity as a dance team is defined by a variety of styles including hip hop, jazz and hip-hop. The girls begin training camp every June and periodically perform and practice each style throughout the year at University football, volleyball and basketball games.

“It’s an 11-month commitment to be a Dazzler,” Popritkin said. “Only a Dazzler knows how stressful it is.”

In April, the 22 Golden Dazzlers will be competing in the National Dance Alliance championship, which consists of a two-minute routine incorporating hip-hop, jazz and pom styles.

Since its formation, the Golden Dazzlers have always competed under Division I. The 2007 competition will be the first time the Dazzlers compete under Division I-A, which is considerably more competitive.

The higher level of competition will change the team’s approach when scouting potential Dazzlers, a process which involves visits to high school performances.

“We’re going to be recruiting much more aggressively,” Popritkin said. “That’s what happens when you move up a level.”

The transition to compete against more talented teams has added extra pressure on this year’s team, but the members maintain each other’s morale through their friendships.

“We are like a family,” said sophomore Monica Flores, a Dazzler. “We’re always together and we learn so much about each other. We always go out, even on Thursday night when we have practice Friday morning.”

Flores is recovering from a torn ACL in her left knee. During practice, she sports a black leg brace, but she was cleared earlier this year to dance and now participates in the majority of the practices with the team.

Her injury has not allowed her to dance with the team since May 2006, but she has remained determined throughout the rehabilitation process.

“I’ve learned not to give up after an injury,” Flores said. “So many people would just lose hope and not try to come back. My determination has proved to my teammates that you can come back from serious injury.”

Flores’ teammates helped her during her weakest physical and emotional moments. On the day she had surgery, the team visited her house to raise her spirits. When Flores was unable to stand in a shower, her teammates aided her.
MUSIC
Robin Thicke – The Evolution of Robin Thicke

THE EVOLUTION OF ROBIN THICKE

For playing Dr. Jason Seaver on the ’80s sitcom “Growing Pains.” The elder Thicke is also credited for introducing Robin to music, seeing as he composed the themes for sitcoms such as “Diff’rent Strokes” and “The Facts of Life.” Having worked with artists like Christina Aguilera, Mya, Brandy, Marc Anthony and Omarion, Thicke signed with Pharrell’s record company, Star Trak Records, he immediately went to work on the album, producing most of the tracks and even playing the piano on three songs.

Thicke’s smooth vocals seem intended to make women tingle by comparing the sweetness of his life to berries and swooning in lyrics like “I guess if we have sex, our love will turn to wine,” in his first song off the album, “Wanna Love You Girl.” Thicke first hooked up with Pharrell of The Neptunes to produce the hit single.

The album features guest appearances from Lil’ Wayne, Faith Evans and Pharrell, even though Thicke carries most of the album through his catchy lyrics and sensual voice.

With the combination of his songwriting, vocals and unique beats, fans will rarely hit the skip button as all the tracks will help create any environment one would want to share with their special someone.

Thicke is currently touring the country opening up for John Legend and performing with India.Arie. It won’t be too long before somebody else will be opening the show for him.

MOVIE
300
Geoffrey Anderson Jr.
Asst. Life! Editor

Spartans and Persians collide for two hours in the testosterone-driven 300, an epic retelling the battle of Thermopylae where a Spartan contingent of 300 men holds off the seemingly innumerable Persian army.

The film, scheduled for theatrical release March 9 and adapted from the graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller (Sin City), is an epic war movie in its truest form: bloody, breathtaking and unrelenting.

Featuring stellar performances by lead actors Gerard Butler (Phantom of the Opera) and Rodrigo Santoro (Love Actually), who play Spartan King Leonidas and Persian King Xerxes, respectively. The battle-ready film will inspire audiences to visit their local army or at least strike the nearest object.

Visually, 300 is stunning, due in part to the use of blue screen for many of the movie’s scenes. When Leonidas and his men first see the Persian enemy approaching in the distance as smoke and dirt are kicked up from under their feet, one can’t help but anticipate the ensuing battle, which is pure visual candy, albeit too bloody for the squeamish.

Aside from the use of blue screen, director Zack Snyder (Dawn of the Dead) uses a technique nicknamed “the crush,” giving 300 a photographic look by manipulating the color balance and contrast ratio of the film.

Butler, who played the Phantom in the 2004 Joel Schumacher version of The Phantom of the Opera, gives the war epic’s best performance, convincingly leading his small group of determined men against a mammoth army.

To physically prepare for the film, Butler worked with former professional mountain-climber Mark Twight, who trained him and the rest of the cast by coordinating workout sessions involving the use of medicine balls and kettle bells.

The results of such physical training are evident: Butler and the cast look terrific and truly resemble warriors who were born to fight.

Comparably, Santoro does an excellent job of portraying the half-naked and sexually ambiguous Xerxes. Although he doesn’t have as much screen time as Butler, Santoro dominates any scene he is in, especially with his commanding voice.

Santoro also deserves credit for being able to wear such a heavy costume – his was made entirely of metal as opposed to cloth. Despite strong performances by the cast, the movie has a distinct flaw: the story’s constant shifting from the action-packed fight scenes by the Spartans and Persians to the dialogue-driven happenings in Sparta.

Although it’s nice to know that Sparta still exists while the men are away fighting, the abrupt shifts kill the adrenaline rush induced by watching someone get decapitated or stabbed for the 40th time.

Nevertheless, if audiences want to feel as if they can take on the world, 300 is the movie to watch. Instead of action, captivating visuals, bloodshed and more bloodshed, it delivers a powerful and satisfying blow worthy of a Spartan soldier.
Golden Dazzlers find unity, strength in numbers

“They took me to a sink and washed my hair,” Flores said. “I’m always telling them now not to be lazy and appreciate dance while you can,” Flores said. “It can be taken from you so easily.”

Her team captain, junior Shea McMayo, who has been with the team for three years, also shares Flores’ leadership attitude. Although she is a performer, she considers herself shy. Her teammates’ presence, however, eases the pressures of performing in front of large crowds.

“Dancing with the team helps my confidence so much,” McMayo said. “My teammates around me give me support.”

As team captain, McMayo has to lead both veteran members as well as newer members such as sophomore Vanessa Marrero. Marrero understands the dedication and time management required to be part of the Dazzlers.

“Being a Dazzler makes you face reality,” Marrero said. “It sets you for life because if you can get through this, then you can get through anything.”

This year, Popritkin grouped 22 personalities to form a team that works together, struggles together, laughs together and dances together during 11 months of the year.

“Being a Dazzler isn’t as easy as it looks,” Popritkin said. “... If you can get through this, then you can get through anything.”

– Vanessa Marrero
School of Computing and Information Sciences

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College of Engineering & Computing
Skirmish: Sophomore guard Iva Ciglar was contained shooting 1-for-10 from the field. The margin of points in the point and free-throw shooting was the difference in the game.

Jekabsone and Adley lead Golden Panthers to victory

WOMEN, page 16

Adley said her nine points, most which came in the post, were not a big deal. “I have to play against Lasma every day in practice; she’s 6’4. It’s nothing,” Adley said.

The Golden Panthers will travel to Lafayette, La., to face the No. 2 seed Ragin’ Cajuns in quarterfinal action Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

The Golden Panthers lost both games to Louisiana-Lafayette in the regular season. “We got to do a lot of things differently and better. We can’t let them control the boards like they did. They literally man-handled us. We got to stop them in transition, play harder and much more physical,” Russo said. “We have nothing to lose. Everyone’s going to have to put their bodies on the line. If we can physically combat with them, we can beat them.”

JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

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Old Spice

Keep it clean.

AND THAT IS COMPLETELY NORMAL. HE HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE HEALTH AND PROTECTION OF THESE TRUSTING, SOFT, SWEET, WOOL-GIVING CREATURES. HE IS A DECENT MAN. SO JUST CALM DOWN, HE HAS A GIRLFRIEND.
Bus accident leaves six dead and twenty-nine injured

ACCIDENT, page 16

students, faculty and staff. We know these people on a first-name basis,” he said. “For now we’re pulling together and supporting each other as best we can.”

On campus, students and residents of the community filled the school’s basketball gym to grieve together and learn more about what had happened. Some wiped away tears as they came in. The university, with about 1,150 students 50 miles south of Toledo, is affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA.

The baseball team had been scheduled to play its first game of the season in Sarasota, Fla., Saturday against Eastern Mennonite College of Harrisonburg, Va., and it had eight more games scheduled in Fort Myers, Fla.

Cobb said the bus was southbound on I-75 when it crashed about 5:30 a.m. The driver may have mistaken an exit ramp for a lane, he said. It was dark at the time, but the weather was clear when the bus went off the bridge and landed on its side in the southbound lanes of the interstate.

The National Transportation Safety Board was called in to investigate.

Five fire trucks were at the scene as firefighters pulled crash victims through the roof of the bus.

Baseball equipment bags littered the scene after the crash, and luggage spilled from the vehicle when it was set right side up.

When the bus was righted, it was clear that all the windows on the driver’s side had been shattered, and there was considerable damage on the front of the bus and on the roof above the driver’s seat.

Calls Friday to the charter company, Executive Coach Luxury Travel Inc. of Ottawa, Ohio, were not immediately returned. Harder said the school had used the company in the past.

Steve Rogers, a Bluffton University assistant football coach, said he was working out in the weight room with members of the football team around 6 a.m. when they saw news of the bus crash on television. When they saw the markings on the bus, “that’s when reality hit everybody,” he said.

His players started calling friends on the baseball team, trying to reach some by cell phone.

“It hits home harder than it would if it had happened at a bigger school. Everybody knows each other,” he said.

Matt Ferguson, a freshman on the baseball team from Pleasant Hill, Ohio, said most of the freshman position players stayed behind.

“We were bummed out we didn’t get to go. Now, we don’t know what to think,” he said.

The team is close-knit, he said. “It’s one huge family. We spend all day together. We go to classes together. We do everything together.”

At a chapel service the night before, students had offered a prayer for their sports teams and other students to travel safely over spring break, said Barrington, a junior from Brooklyn Heights, Ohio.

“Sometimes you take that stuff for granted,” she said.

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RENALDO SMITH
Staff Writer

For the Golden Panthers (12-17), the most consistant attribute of the season didn’t come in the form of free-throw shooting, 3-point shooting, rebounding or even defense. It came in the form of two things that can’t be reflected on a stat sheet: heart and hustle.

Using those two elements, the Golden Panthers left it all out on the floor in a deheartening 91-88 overtime loss to the Florida Atlantic Owls (16-14) in the opening round of the Sunbelt Conference Tournament on Feb. 28, in Boca Raton.

With all odds against them in a hostile environment, the Golden Panthers appeared to be anything but rattled early on.

Their team play allowed them to tap into an unlikely offensive force in freshaman center Nikola Gacesa. Although the Serbian has made big plays over the course of the season, he played with the confidence of a go-to man when they needed him to.

After capitalizing on an early lay-up in the paint to establish an inside threat, Gacesa, who finished the first half with nine points, drilled a 3-pointer to give FIU an early 10-8 advantage. Following Gacesa’s lead, the rest of the team shared the offensive load early.

Defensive specialist Chris Fuller hit a couple of jumpers, senior guard Johwen Villegas was aggressive in the lane and sophomore forward Alex Galindo chipped in with five early points. Despite the Golden Panthers’ strong play, the Owls still managed to stay in the game thanks in no small part to Carlos Munroe.

With everyone else on his team struggling, Munroe took matters into his own hands as he caught fire from the field.

It was his 14 points on 7-for-11 shooting that pulled the Owls within two points heading into the second half, 36-34.

After nine lead changes in the opening half, the up-and-down theme continued. Villegas and freshman point guard Erick Nsangou shot the ball well for the Golden Panthers, while guard DeAndre Rice appeared to have an extra pep in his step for the Owls. After Fuller and Villegas took turns draining jumpers, Galindo converted a three-point play to give the Golden Panthers a comfortable 70-61 lead with 7:25 remaining.

Sensing the game slipping away, Rice led the Owls on a 12-2 run to gain a slim 73-72 lead. Galindo buried a big 3-pointer to give the Golden Panthers a comfortable 82-80 lead with 7:25 remaining.

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Women’s basketball team moves on to next round of conference play

MAGALLY ESTRELLA
Staff Writer

The women’s basketball team defeated Troy 61-49 at home on Feb. 28 and will play in the second round of the 2007 Sun Belt Conference Women’s Basketball Championship.

The Golden Panthers (16-13) pulled through and snapped a four-game losing streak that couldn’t have come at a better time.

The win marked their third victory against Troy this season.

Senior center Lasma Jekabsone led all scorers with a game-high 23 points, including 14 in the second half aiding the Golden Panthers to victory.

“We can’t stop it. It’s really a no-brainer. You got to go inside to win,” coach Cindy Russo said. “It’s hard, they don’t have the man power to stop our post play.”

Jekabsone added a game-high eight rebounds and had an overall great performance.

“I was just shooting the ball over my defender the whole game,” she said.

Junior guard LaQuetta Ferguson scored in double digits for the 13th straight game this season with 11 points.

Although she struggled from the floor during the first half, she pulled through for the Golden Panthers with back-to-back field goals with under two minutes left in the game, including the team’s only 3-pointer at the end of the game, stretching their lead to 10 points.

“When you got teammates rebounding, it doesn’t matter how many [3-pointers] you make or how many you miss as long as you make it up on the defensive side of the floor,” Ferguson said.

Helping Jekabsone and Ferguson was sophomore forward Marquita Adley, who provided a strong presence in the post.

“Coming off the bench, teammates looked for her, feeding her the ball in the post, which either resulted in an easy field goal or a foul charged to a Troy defender.”

The Golden Panthers dominated the boards and scored more points in the paint away by 12 points to seal the win.

The Trojans (12-17) got off to a strong start and opened up an eight-point lead, 16-8, in the first eight minutes of the game, but the Golden Panthers overpowered the Ragin’ Cajuns the second half, as they pulled off a 61-49 victory over Troy. With the victory the Golden Panthers advance to the Sun Belt Conference quarterfinals.

MOVING UP: Senior center Lasma Jekabsone recorded a game-high 23 points on route to a 61-49 victory over Troy. With the victory the Golden Panthers advance to the Sun Belt Conference quarterfinals.

Bluffton University baseball team suffers loss

DANIEL YEE
AP Wire

A charter bus carrying a college baseball team from Ohio plunged off a highway ramp early Friday and slammed into the pavement below, killing six people, injuring 29 and scattering sports equipment across the road, authorities said.

The bus, carrying the team from the close-knit, Mennonite-affiliated Bluffton University, toppled off the Northside Drive bridge onto a pickup truck on Interstate 75 shortly before dawn, police spokesman Joe Cobb said.

“It looked to me like a big slab of concrete falling down,” said truck driver Danny Lloyd, 57, of Frostburg, Md. “I didn’t recognize it was a bus. I think when I saw the thing coming, I think I closed my eyes and stepped on the gas.”

The impact broke his windshield, pushed his truck into the concrete and wrecked the front bumper, but Lloyd wasn’t injured.

Four students, the bus driver and the bus driver’s wife were killed, said police Maj. Calvin Moss.

A.J. Ramthun, an 18-year-old second baseman, was asleep in a window seat when the bus hit the overpass wall, jolting him awake.

“I just looked out and saw the road coming up at me. I remember the catcher tapping me on the head, telling me to get out because there was gas all over,” he told reporters.

His brother, a fellow team member, was trapped underneath the bus and damaged his hip. “He might not recover from that,” Ramthun said. He said his own collarbone was broken and he had to get stitches in his face.

Nineteen students - three in critical condition - were being treated at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. Dr. Leon Haley said. He said all but two students were awake and talking Friday morning, and doctors were checking them for broken bones.

“All things considered, they are pretty calm,” Haley said. “They are very aware of what’s going on.”

Three other injured people were taken to Piedmont Hospital, and seven were taken to Atlanta Medical Center, Haley said.

Piedmont hospital spokeswoman Diana Lewis said the team’s coach, James Grandey, 29, was in serious condition and expected to improve.

“This is a profound and tragic day in the life of Bluffton University,” school President James Harder told reporters Friday morning in Ohio.

Classes were canceled, and the school called off other sports trips planned during next week’s spring break, Harder said. He said he had no details on the identities of those killed and injured.

“This is deeply impacting all of our