TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY BILL
Summer may bring cheaper textbooks

CHRISTINA VEIGA
News Director

Long lines and outrageous prices could become a thing of the past at State University System campus bookstores.

If passed, Florida House bill 603, or the Florida Textbook Affordability Bill, will require Florida colleges and universities to provide textbook information to students, allowing them to hunt for the best prices at the beginning of each semester.

The bill has been filed in the 2008 Legislature, and will become effective July 1 if approved.

"It'd be all for a bill making textbooks cheaper," said senior Kris Graham. "It's almost as bad as prescription drugs."

Graham bought all his textbooks through the FIU Bookstore this semester, costing him $400-$500 for four classes.

Championed by Rep. Anitere Flores, R-Miami and former FIU lobbyist, and XBooks Inc., a free online textbook selling company based in Tallahassee, the bill will require schools to post the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) of required textbooks on university Web sites at least 30 days before the beginning of each semester.

"The biggest problem is there is obviously no competition in the college textbook market because students really only have one option, and that's the campus bookstore," said Audie Rowell, president and one option, and that's the campus bookstore," said Audie Rowell, president and co-founder of XBooks, Inc. "They don't have time to search for the cheaper books online, and they don't have an opportunity to sell their books to other students."

With many students turning to online services and alternative book stores that surround college campuses, knowing in advance which texts are required will give students time to shop around, and allows shipping time for online purchases.

"I'm a fan of Amazon; anything not to have to go to the bookstore," said junior Nina Martinez, who admits to not buying textbooks or just copying crucial parts from friends when prices are too expensive.

Bobbette Coulter of Philadelphia, an avid merlot drinker, was shocked when she discovered FIU students made the merlot she had drank.

"I didn't even know that when I got it. I think it's wonderful. Coulter said. "At home, I strictly drink merlot. This is a little bit more fruity than what I have at home, but I liked it very much."

The festival featured various events including the "Kellogg's Kids Kitchen" hosted by star chef Giada De Laurentis and the "Barilla Interactive Cooking Lunch," a hands on cooking course on Asian cuisine hosted by chef Ming Tsai.

"We went to the French tent and we tried all the wines there and the cheeses and that's when we saw Giada and Paula Deen," said Vivian Franco, an FIU alumna who spent a short time in line to get her book autographed by one of the star chefs.

The FIU delegation was comprised of 10 rookies and seven veterans who were involved in nine separate committees. Together, they brought home awards in five of these committees, including three honorable mentions, one outstanding delegation and one best delegation.

In addition, the FIU team won best overall small delegation.

This award is one of the top three honors bestowed by the conference, which includes best international delegation and best large delegation.

"We have never done so well at the Harvard conference before. Our only previous award was from last year when we got one honorary mention," Acosta said.

The Harvard Model U.N. conference was held in Boston from Feb. 14-18 and is considered to be the country's second most important competition for model U.N. organizations.

According to Kathleen Black, a head delegate, this is second to the model U.N. simulation held in New York, which is to be held next month.

FIU plucks six Model U.N. honors

The FIU Model United Nations delegation brought six awards back to the University after participating in the Harvard Model U.N. conference in February.

The winnings were unprecedented in the organization's history.

"We've never done this before," said Alexandra Acosta, one of the head delegates. "It was a huge surprise that shows that humble schools like FIU can come on top.

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Power outages leave millions without electricity

Bill may provide scouting time for best book prices

When XBooks realized their site wasn’t working out, because students didn’t have enough time to shop around, they approached Flores, who was already working on a bill that would have exempted textbooks from sales tax. Flores recognized the need for textbook reform through Rowell’s past work as a lobbyist. Instead of pushing for tax exemptions, Flores and Rowell merged their ideas.

"You don’t necessarily make textbooks cheaper by not charging tax on them. We have a much bigger problem," Flores said. "The way we make textbooks cheaper is by promoting competition and encouraging professors and universities to ask questions that maybe they aren’t asking now.”

Flores expects the legislation to pass by May, when the legislative session will end.

"It’s an issue that the universities, community colleges and student governments have gotten more vocal about. One of the most important things is for university students to let their elected officials know that they want this to pass," Flores said.

AP Wire

Hundreds of thousands of people were without electricity across Florida Tuesday after eight power plants went offline, authorities said.

Between 600,000 and 800,000 households had no electricity at the height of the crisis Tuesday afternoon, though power was slowly being restored, Karen Visvespo of Florida Power and Light told broadcaster CNN.

Media reports said the outage could have affected as many as 4 million people.

The outage affected traffic lights, Miami’s International Airport, air conditioning units and trapped people in elevators. Authorities said some kind of grid disturbance likely caused the power plants to shut down — sparking rolling blackouts — but could not give an exact cause of the problem by the time of publication.

At least two nuclear power plants were involved, though it was unclear if the power plants themselves went offline first or if the shutdown was triggered by a problem on the grid.

Much of the outage was restricted to southern Florida, though The Miami Herald reported that electricity was out as far north as Jacksonville.

Mayor Carlos Alvarez of Miami-Dade County said in a news conference that the problem was “technical,” not criminal, and that power would be restored “within the next couple of hours.”

New York next stop for Model U.N. participants

There, the procedures significantly differ from the Harvard conference; in the Boston simulation, a team could only propose one resolution. In New York, however, this is not the case, as there is no limit to proposals.

"At Harvard it was much more regulated and we could only pass one resolution. In New York, where it’s less regulated, we plan to pass many more," said veteran participant Robert Myers, who won the Best Delegate Award at the Harvard conference alongside his partner.

Teams of delegates from schools all over the world compete in both events.

“The Model U.N. is an international organization with schools from all over the U.S. and from places like Turkey, China, Latin America, Europe and Africa," said Gonal To1, director of the FIU Model U.N.

According to Tol, the student delegates represent a country at the Model U.N. conferences and simulations.

They then try to make alliances with other countries to support a number of proposed resolutions.

Countries are selected for the Model U.N. delegates based on a submission of the group’s top 10 choices, said Kathleen Black, also a head delegate.

At the Harvard conference, FIU delegates represent Cameroon. In March, delegates will represent the Czech Republic for the New York simulation.

According to Black, Cameroon is a developing African nation with close ties to the African Union and European states, and the Czech Republic is a part of the most powerful economic block and has ties to both the Eastern and European Union.

The FIU Model U.N. is one of the most challenging institutions the university has.

“We do a lot of research into our countries so you have to be a good academic researcher. You must also be able to express, present and defend your views with good communication skills,” Tol said. “Also, it’s very competitive to get in. For this semester we got 90 applications and we accepted only 17.”

If a student is interested in joining the Model U.N. team, they must apply ahead of time and have an interview with the staff.

“FIU has a long tradition of success and it is always looking for students to uphold its high standards,” Myers said.

At FIU, the Model U.N. program is a political science course offered during spring semester.

Students study the diplomacy and use their skills to compete in national conferences, according to its Web site.

Applications are available at http://www.fiu.edu/~modelun/
Star chefs, cook-up fancy treats

WINE AND FOOD, page 1

“It’s been the most successful I think out of any year – especially the time I’ve been here – and it’s because we developed a lot more organization as far as more supervisors goes and a lot of planning. We’ve been planning since November of last year,” said Alex Blanco, a senior majoring in hospitality management who was in charge of the culinary students.

Sean Menke, a student volunteer in charge of delivering inventory, said that although he was getting paid to work, he would have liked to have been allowed to sample some of the foods and drinks.

“I understand that these are the customers, but I think that as volunteers it would be nice if before or after the event they would allow the students to do a quick walkthrough and try a sample of the food,” Menke said. “We’ve been working our butts off since eight in the morning till five at night.”

Blanco said students are not allowed to drink because the work they do is considered a job.

“We let the culinary students walk around and try a little bit of food, as long as they don’t drink,” Blanco said. “But as a culinary student I want to drink not necessarily to party, but to taste the new things that are coming out. This should be important, especially for someone that is in the culinary industry.”

Christian Fombrun, festival liaison, said allowing students to drink alcohol while on the job can get out of control.

“If you tell the students ‘yeah, you can have a drink,’ they’re not just going to have that one drink, they’re going to have a lot of drinks. It’s so hard to put that limit. It’s not that we don’t want that. We would love to let the [students] have that break and participate but then how do you control it? It’s completely uncontrollable,” Fombrun said.

Dr. Barry Gump, professor of beverage management at FIU, said the festival offered opportunities for people to learn more about the products in the market.

“‘It was a wonderful opportunity for people to get a sense of the many products that are available today to go with different meals and social occasions,’” Gump said.

GO ONLINE TO SEE MORE FESTIVAL PHOTOS

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Nader makes another feeble bid at White House

JOSEPH MEATLOAF MARHEE
Opinion Editor

Apparently, Ralph Nader’s impromptu entrance into the presidential race is meant to be a holy day for the members of the Green Party and anyone else who is Nader-minded.

Formerly a Nader supporter, I understand his appeal: He’s critical of unethical practices by companies, proactive on environmental issues and seemingly has the cleanliness of political records to the public’s knowledge — only equaled by Ron Paul.

Why is it that anyone would have any reason to distrust Good Ole’ Ralph? Is it because he’s a hypocrite owned by the Trial Lawyers lobby? Or is he just a typical politician, a Lyndon Johnson for the new millennium?

What’s more, he has since been replaced as the politically disillusioned students’ candidate du jour; an honor Ron Paul currently holds with his slightly more believable, superhuman platform.

According to Nader’s Web site, he’s a self-proclaimed “critic of corporations” and a “public interest activist.”

I found this amusing since Nader, according to RealChange.org, owns stock in corporations he outspokenly opposes; chief among them, Cisco Systems, a huge violator of Human Rights.

Despite his “holier-than-thou” act, Nader has always been as ambitious and easily bought as any other politician in Washington, but this is something his own party has known for some time.

“[Nader running for president again is] an ego-centered exercise in futility. [Until the Green Party wins more local elections], winning is in vain for we are unnervingly only detracts from its message, long-term goals and current accomplishments,” said Larry Barnett, Green Party member and in Green Horizon Quarterly.

Even his own “liutenant” has given up on the hopeless Nader crusade of money, power and hypocritical greed.

“We spent a hundred years trying to clean sweatshops out of our system and what happens,” said Jim Turner, former Nader campaign officer in a - “Along comes the first major reformer of any impact, and he starts doing the same goddamned thing.”

Even Nader’s background is full of holes. He claims to live on $15,000 per year according to the Washington Post. He actually earns about $250,000, as of 2006, per year and (through the 1970s, at least) lived in a boarding house.

A bulk of his income comes from speaking fees, attests Forbes in the article “Ralph Nader, Inc.,” according to Forbes in 1990, Nader owns at least $1 million in Cisco stock and a $100,000 home, which technically purchased by his brother, in 1976 is his primary residence.

The only honesty in Nader’s campaign — as far as I can detect — is his claim of defending “the little guy.”

By this, Nader means hiring his network of trial lawyers — who has always been a big source of campaign funding — to defend said “little guy[s],” at least according to Forbes and the Wall Street Journal in 1990, ’91 and ’92.

If Nader intended the lobby to actually protect the “little guy,” then he would have outlined a more altruistic plan. Something along the lines of defending the downtrodden through a registry satisfying the federal pro bono requirement would be more beneficial.

Nader’s status as a phony is nothing new. Even as far back as 1976 he’s had the media (Mary McGroery and Nicholas Van Hoff- man among them) peddling his “Draft Nader” rhetoric to the otherwise indifferent masses, explained David Sanford in Ralph & Me.

Even with his all-time low in supporters, he’s still touted as a champion of the “little guys” rights, look no further than the Feb. 24 MSNBC report announcing his candidacy.

Nader certainly isn’t the boarding house, ride-bumming martyr he’s made himself out to be.

I’m sure his $1,000 a plate support dinners, as reported by Dan Burt in Abuse of Trust, should be able to ring over supporters for his next shameful loss in November.

After a good three decades of playing the “good guy,” Nader should get the hint. Americans didn’t need you in the 70s and they certainly don’t need you now.

Stop before you embarrass yourself - again.

MTV: Students need to stand up for issues or die

ROBY GONZALEZ
Contributing Writer

A few days ago my friend and I were having a typical political discussion on who would be the best candidate for president. My friend was a tremendous Ron Paul Supporter and of course was telling me the great thing Paul could bring to our country, and was happily pointing out the negative qualities of my candidate.

After Super Tuesday, I contacted my friend again and to rub Paul’s defeat in his face, I asked him “Who are you going to vote for now?” His answer was, “I am voting for Ron Paul. If he isn’t the republican nominee, then I am not voting.”

Although correct or not, he based his opinion on the “Douche and Turd Sandwich” episode of “South Park” – a parallel between the episode and the presidential election.

This made me ask: you would throw your vote away because you don’t like either candidate? I understand your support for Ron Paul, but why not cast your vote for a viable candidate and have a say in who will become the next leader of the Free World?

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 voted more, maybe they would save our social security system and maybe minimize that deficit that we will inherit.

But we tend not to vote, so what do politicians do? They protect the interest of the generation that has the highest voter turnout per capita, “the Baby Boomers.” So their social security and their interests are protected, regardless of if we inherit the $10 trillion.

The reason Paul has gained so much popularity is because he has a large college student support base.

He had many ideas which our generation should get the hint. Americans didn’t need you in the 70s and they certainly don’t need you now.

Stop before you embarrass yourself again.

We should want politicians concerning themselves with the issues that affect our lives and our generation, not those of our parents or grandparents. It needs to be recognized that we don’t just watch MTV but have the power to swing elections.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Should AIDS research be solely the responsibility of the private sector?

• Yes –The government research funding is more than sufficient for the current statistics of those living with AIDS

81%

• No – AIDS cases are reaching a critical level and needs to be better funded by the government

19%

Total participants: 30

Cast your vote at www.fiu.us
They say dancing is good for the soul. If that’s the case, then 25 straight hours of it must be even better.

Dance Marathon, the largest philanthropy event at FIU, benefits the Children’s Miracle Network, specifically the Miami Children’s Hospital, the only CMN hospital in the area. The festivities kick off at noon on March 1 and end at 1 p.m. on March 2. “It’s not just about donating money to the Children’s Miracle Network,” said Leah Dunleavy, DM executive director. “It’s about having the donations really represent what the kids go through.”

Besides raising funds, the theme of all Dance Marathons across the country is to stay on your feet for a number of hours. Dunleavy explained that this self imposed exhaustion gives those participating in DM a look at how the children in the CMN feel every day—a gesture that means a great deal. “It means a lot to the kids to know the dancers are going through a glimpse as to what they go through,” Dunleavy said.

This year, the fund raising goal is $100,000. Last year, DM was able to raise $86,000. While current totals are kept confidential, the grand total will be announced on March 2 during the closing ceremonies. “We are very well on our way to getting to our goal,” said Mariela Campuzano, DM advisor.

In order to participate as a dancer during DM, individuals must raise $140 and, to be a committee planning member, $575. Donations will be accepted until 12:30 p.m. on March 2, according to Dunleavy. Once DM starts, participants will be on their feet for 25 hours and, this year, things will be a little different for them.

For the first time ever, participants will have a chance to take a shower, which is a very big deal for Eliza Arenas, DM special events director who has also participated as a DM dancer in the past. “It’s upsetting for some dancers not having the opportunity to shower,” she said.

The newfound ability of participants to shower is due to the new location for DM which, for the first time, will be held in the Recreation Center instead of the Pharmed Arena. In general, DM staff believes the Recreation Center will be a better venue for the event. Besides the shower, participants will also have their own lockers. Events can be more sectioned off and food can be kept in its own area that does not interfere with the actual events. No outside food or drinks will be allowed during DM to prevent caffeine highs that could lead to a caffeine crash, according to Campuzano.

Food is being provided for all participants by several vendors including Quiznos.

Are You Ready? 
... to Increase Diversity In International Affairs And Diplomacy

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 15TH

www.uncfsp.org/iipp
Creating ringtones fosters individuality

With today's cell phones capable of playing MP3-quality songs, ditching factory-default beep and whistle ringtones has never been more tempting. The possibilities of assigning specific tones to friends, family or that special someone you might yearn anymore as there are available outlets for these creative urges.

Phone service providers such as AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless all offer high-quality ringtones for purchase on their Web sites. However, having the corporate muscle to provide the latest songs for your phone allows these companies to digitally price gouge you. At $2.50 a download, the cost of individuality grows exponentially when you factor in the speed at which personal musical taste evolves in a college setting.

In the future, make your own ringtones, for free. Sites like www.makeyourownringtone.com and www.myzer-tones.com allow for easy file uploading and conversion online. Users can upload their favorite files to cut them down to a ringer and select the effects menu to fade in and out the first and last seconds of the ringtone to smooth out the cut's rough edges. For more control, Audacity's freeware editing software comes in handy.

Available at www.audacity.sourceforge.net, Audacity lets users manipulate songs to their tastes using a visual editor and a variety of audio effects to home brew ringtones.

Simply take your favorite song, say from the Grateful Dead, and cut the introduction and other unnecessary sections from it. Use Audacity and cut it down to size using the same visual editor used by online editors. Once you’ve cut down the song, select the effects menu to fade in and out the first and last seconds of the ringtone to smooth out the cut's rough edges. To export files in MP3 format, users will have to visit the site's help and frequently asked questions section for directions on downloading LAME, an MP3 encoding library.

Audacity also comes in a variety of operating system flavors to satisfy Windows, Mac and even Linux aficionados. Before getting ringtöne happy though, spend some time thinking about the songs you may use. Anything in the Top 40 countdown is out of the question.

A popular ringtone will get you lost in a crowd—be it you and three people in an elevator or fifty people dancing to it in a club. If you have to have the latest popular song as your ringtone, consider choosing a section of the lyrics that catch your attention rather than the chorus everyone and their mothers are rocking out to.

But beware of the curse of staid individualism. Having “The Macarena” as your ringtone may scare away those who don’t know you within hearing distance, including attractive members of the opposite sex with a dry sense of humor. So now that you have been armed with the knowledge of how to create your own special, unique ringtone, make sure to use this knowledge wisely.
Pitching must improve for team to win

MARTINEZ, page 8

his collegiate career over the fence in the initial match with the Trojans. Meanwhile, Rainy Fuentes knocked in 5 RBIs and batted .429 over the three game series. While the first two games were effectively devoid of drama, the third was particularly disheartening for the Golden Panthers. Taking a 7-3 lead into the seventh inning, the bullpen was mercilessly rocked as the Trojans added nine runs in three innings to cap the score off at 12-7. Should FIU continue to swing the bat, wins will inevitably come their way. Coach Thomas needs to address the pitching issue immediately, although his options are seemingly very limited. The bullpen’s struggles have carried over from last season. The team’s weakest point last season cost the Golden Panthers quite a few games including both games against UM where the bullpens let late inning leads evaporate.

In college baseball, some of the scores could be mistaken for football box scores. So, the Golden Panthers will have some games where it seems their offense can’t be stopped. Obviously, the Golden Panthers’ fans were reminded of the old adage after the three-game series: pitching wins ball games. Despite the potential offensive juggernaut the Golden Panthers could be, their bats do, at times, go cold, and the pitching staff had best be prepared to handle these rough times. Otherwise, it will be a very long debut season for coach Thomas.

Townsend, Stewart back from surgery

NOTEBOOK, page 8

The presence of Castillo could be a key ingredient to FIU’s success this season mostly because of his on-field talent but also because of his experience. Starting 161-of-180 for the Cardinals over three seasons is experience that Turtle Thomas’ young roster could use. Castillo contributed right away as a Golden Panther after winning the first game of the series with a solo home run to lead off the third inning putting FIU in a 3-0 hole. Pollizano left after five innings finishing with five runs allowed (four earned), two walks, and two strikeouts. FIU sophomore Tyler Townsend launched a deep two-run home run to right-center field off of USC starter Ryan Cook to cut the deficit to 5-2. The Trojans added two more in the ninth before going on to win the game 9-3 and seal a series victory. Townsend each drove in two after consecutive doubles in the third inning to give FIU an early 4-0 lead.

Even reliever Evan Ellison coughed up one more run making it 4-3 before FIU added three more insurance runs in the sixth inning to make it 7-3. After the Trojans scored three more runs in the seventh to again cut the deficit to one run at 7-6, they unloaded with six more runs in the eighth inning highlighted by a three-run homer by center fielder Nick Buss to push it to 12-7 in favor of the Trojans.

Sophomore reliever Brian Santana took the loss for the Golden Panthers after allowing six earned runs in only 1.2 innings.

FIU senior starter Steven Stewart made his first appearance in a Golden Panther uniform after missing the 2007 season due to off season elbow surgery and showed no lingering complications. Rami Fuentes and Tyler Townsend each drove in two after consecutive doubles in the third inning to give FIU an early 4-0 lead. Stewart was pulled in the sixth inning after pitching 5.2 innings with two earned runs, two walks and a strikeout and FIU clinging to a 4-2 lead. Stewart made his first appearance in a Golden Panther uniform after allowing six earned runs in only 1.2 innings.

UP NEXT

The Golden Panthers will host Wagner University for a four-game set Feb. 29-March 3. The starters for the mid-week games have yet to be determined.
TROJAN SWEEP

BASEBALL SERIES: USC 3, FIU 0

Opening series' hopes deflate

Leading up to the team’s season opener against the University of Southern California, the Golden Panthers’ baseball team generated much excitement for the upcoming season as it should have with many other FIU teams not doing so well.

A rebuilding season for the football team, a dip in performance for the men’s basketball squad and a three game series against a nationally renowned USC program set up new manager Henry “Turtle” Thomas with an unusual amount of excitement from a fan base still finding its footing.

Scoring 19 runs in three games is nothing to scoff at, especially against a team like the Trojans that has taken home 12 national championships. Unfortunately, giving up 37 runs against the opposing squad diminishes the grandeur of that offensive achievement.

The Golden Panthers received a dose of reality this weekend as they lost three games against the Trojans. Coach Thomas got the same reminder in baseball that first year coach Mario Cristobal learned in football - simply changing regimes will not erase last season’s problems.

Pitching problems made the games hard to win. Starting pitching once again undermined FIU’s chances against the Trojans during the first two games while the bullpen let an early lead slip away in the finale. Certainly it is not time to panic, but Thomas is going to have to find a way to keep six members of his staff from giving up so many home runs in a three game series.

Sophomore designated hitter Tyler Townsend is entering his second year as a Golden Panther after a successful freshman season. During the three game series, Townsend was the most dangerous hitter for FIU, checking in with an OPS of 1.371 and driving in 10 runs.

Unfortunately, giving up 37 runs against the opposing squad diminishes the grandeur of that offensive achievement.

The presence of the senior, who also won a Florida National High School championship while at Gulliver Prep, will be instrumental for some of the younger players, Castillo explained, "You just have to work hard and learn that baseball is game of failure and that no matter what happens, you just gotta keep going at it."

As far as Jorge’s plans after his lone season in a Golden Panther uniform, he mentioned that he hopes to continue playing once his collegiate career is over. “After this season, hopefully we win, and hopefully get drafted and go pro,” Jorge said."

Although there were good turnouts at all three games and both pre and post-game festivities, the Golden Panthers often fell behind and were not able to recover. The three game sweep at the hands of the Trojans left FIU with an 0-8 all-time record against the Pac-10 foe and an 0-3 to start the season.

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In the fourth inning, two critical errors by second baseman Ryan Mollica and first baseman Jorge Castillo allowed USC to score 3 runs total in what would eventually be a four-run inning and a 10-0 lead. Allen was pulled after just 3.2 innings and allowed a total of ten runs, six of which were earned.

USC started Brian Boxberger pitched five innings allowing six hits and four runs total. On the Golden Panthers’ side, FIU accumulated runs slowly as they scored four in the fourth, one in the seventh, two in the eighth and two in the ninth.

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