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 would 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 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 buy textbooks from the school bookstore,” said junior Luiza Fontes. She had bought all her books through Amazon.com this semester, costing her $300-$400 at the FIU Bookstore for the past.

The bill will also require professors to determine whether changes in new editions make it necessary to use that edition, and to ensure that items sold in packages would make it necessary to use that edition, and to determine whether changes in new editions has spent $300-$400 at the FIU Bookstore too expensive.

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“Taste buds satisfied on Ocean Drive”

EDDITH SEVILLA
BBC Managing Editor

More than 30,000 people visited the South Beach Wine and Food Festival to mingle with their favorite Food Network chefs, taste different wines and spirits and eat various foods.

Bobette 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 Kidz 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.

Despite the heat, FIU alumna Jessica Rodriguez enjoyed the numerous events presented by the Food Network.

“I come every year and I love it. I watch the Food Network religiously. I love the chefs, I love the food, I love the wine and it’s at the beach,” Rodriguez said. “Other than the [heat], it’s South Florida. That’s expected.”

While thousands enjoyed the food, beverages and chef presentations, about 700 students volunteered to help the event run smoothly.

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“Just the organization’s history.”
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 his previous work as a lobbyist for FIU.

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 Legislature to pass it 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.

Power outages leave millions without electricity

The Miami Herald reported that electricity was out as far north as Jacksonville.

Maryos 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

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

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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.

“We 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 eight 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.
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 cleanest of political records — to the public’s knowledge — only equalled 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 disenfranchised 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 supposedly 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], we will remain an unwinning 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 “lieutenant” 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 $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 he 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 guys,” 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 McGrorey 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.

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 how great he is. Ron is the cleanest of political records — something I don’t think anyone else in the field has.

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 republic candidate, then I am not voting.”

Although correct or not, he based his opinion on the “Dooce and Turd Sandwich” episode of “South Park” and the “Baby Boomers.” I agree that our 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 has many ideas which our generation related to, and if he would have won, we would’ve expected him to deliver on his promises for our vote.

Since the percentage of college students who do vote is miniscule, candidates don’t find it necessary to develop strategies to address issues that concern us. Personally, I have seen a billion political ads talking about social security, and who will do a better job protecting it. But I have never seen a political ad talking about providing health-care, or nutrition for students attending college.

I read an article the other day that nicknamed our generation, “Generation Me.” It claimed that our age group was self-absorbed and self-interested. It claimed that we were driven by our own materialism: such as our cars, our clothes, and our iPhones.

I absolutely don’t find anything wrong with receiving the best benefits possible, looking good or having an iPhone, but what I do believe, is that we’re stuck on the smaller picture.

We need to center our self-interests in long-term goals, such as protecting our retirement, minimizing the taxes we will have to pay and maybe protecting our constitutional rights while we’re at it. But first we face immense obstacles such as increasing the voter-turnout of our generation.

It has come to the point that MTV has to tell us “Vote or Die,” when we sit down to watch “The Real World.” In November, let’s awaken the sleeping giant, and let this nation know that we are no longer silent.

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?
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.
Dance Marathon sees a big reform

DANCE, page 5

For those participating, Arenas suggests getting a good night’s rest the day before and to show up on time in addition to bringing as many changes of clothes as participants feel they will need. Shoes are also important with Crocs being Arenas’ number one suggestion for participants, followed by sneakers.

Planning for this year’s event started 10 months ago, organized by DM in February.

Creating ringtunes fosters individuality

With today’s cell phones capable of playing MP3 quality songs, ditching factory-default beep and whistle ring tones has never been more tempting. The possibilities of assigning specific tones to friends, family or that special someone you might be avoiding will also stoke the fires of freeing your inner customization.

Thankfully, you need not yean 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 ring tones 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 friendly 30 seconds by hearing and selecting their preferred portions from a visual time map of the song.

For more control, Audacity’s free audio 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 ring tones.

Simply take your favorite song, cut it down to an 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 ringtone 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 individualism.

Having “The Macarena” as your ringtone may score you points for irony among friends, but it 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 empowered with the knowledge of how to create your own special, unique ringtone, make sure to use this knowledge wisely.
Team cannot hold late lead in finale

BASEBALL, page 8

In the eighth inning, 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.

Sophomore 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.

SWING AWAY: Sophomore Tyler Townsend had a solid series.

Townsend, Stewart back from surgery

The presence of Castillo could be a key ingredient to FIU’s success this season mostly because of his off-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 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. In the sixth inning, with runners on second and third and nobody out, Jorge Castillo lined out to first baseman Mike Roskopf who quickly threw to shortstop Hector Rabago who tagged out senior John Petika to cap off a double play.

The Trojans’ Hector Rabago and catcher Robert Stock also went deep in the eighth inning as they hit solo runs home runs off of FIU reliever Daniel DeSimone. Trojans added two more in the ninth before going on to win the game 9-3 and seal a series victory.

TUSC 12 FIU 7

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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.
Both squads were locked into a tight battle through the first two innings on opening night until the Trojans unloaded on No. 1 starter senior Sergio Bonilla in the third inning. After RBI singles by center fielder Nick Bass and shortstop Grant Green respectively, the Golden Panthers trailed 2-0. Two batters later, designated hitter Mike Roskopf launched a grand slam just to the right of the scoreboard to give the Trojans a 6-0 lead, USC would never look back.

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 five runs.

Those numbers will obviously deflate as the season goes on, but in turning in such a potent performance against an extremely strong team is certainly a positive experience to draw from. Freshman Javier Sujo was a pleasant surprise for the team, getting on base at over a 55 percent clip and writing himself a nice little story as he put the second pitch of his career in a Golden Panther uniform, he mentioned that baseball is a 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 Panter 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.”

For Golden Panther first baseman Jorge Castillo, the decision to transfer from the University of Louisville to FIU for his senior season was based on two things: family and manager Turtle Thomas. “I wanted to come back home to play in front of all my family and for Coach Turtle,” Castillo said after compiling a .301 career average in three seasons at UL. “Turtle Thomas knows all of his stuff, knows what to do, and everything about the game of baseball; he’s a good teacher.”

He participated in the College World Series last season, where he gained some knowledge on how to play on big stages. “I learned to how to cope with pressure and just to have fun,” Jorge said.

The presence of the senior, who also won a Florida National High School championship while at Gulfview 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.”

In the fourth inning, two critical errors by second baseman Ryan Mollina 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 Bloxberger 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. 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.”

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The presence of the senior, who also won a Florida National High School championship while at Gulfview 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 Panter 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.”

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