TOWN HALL MEETING

Budget crisis plan revised, prioritized

JULIA CARDENUTO
News Director

University executives presented an updated version of their plan to deal with a budget gap up to $61 million in state funds over three years and, much like last year’s process, some departments and programs are higher on the priority list than others.

University President Modesto Maidique, Provost Ronaldo Berkman and Chief Financial Officer Vivian Sanchez spoke in turns at a March 9 town hall meeting, each describing different aspects of the plan for the University’s future, which included a three-year preliminary plan that divided departments and programs into four tiers.

“We did not do across the board cuts. We didn’t believe one size fits all,” Sanchez said. “We did not believe that that was the appropriate way of making cuts for the betterment of this institution.”

The programs in the first tier, including arts and sciences, business, engineering and public health, will suffer the least with a 3.3 percent cut in the upcoming fiscal year and 3.6 percent in the following year.

Group two included hospitality, nursing and education and these will suffer a 4.1 percent cut this next fiscal year and up to 4.6 percent in the following year.

Third tier programs, architecture and the arts, journalism and law will likely suffer a 5.1 percent cut this year. The third is considered the last tier for academic programs.

Group four consists of the libraries, Honors College, museums, student affairs and all other areas under the jurisdiction of the provost and will suffer the largest cut of 5.3 percent for the next fiscal year.

The criteria for the tier process was based on whether the program or department is strategic to the University, if it generates return on investments, its cost and the rate of faculty and Ph.D. production.

According to Sanchez’s projections, the University will have lost a combined $61 million in state funds between the 2006-07 fiscal year and 2011-12.

The University expects to close the
Florida unemployment moves to 8.6 percent in January

Florida’s unemployment has been rising rapidly in the past few months.

According to state officials, the unemployment rate hit a 16-year high at 8.6 percent. This comes near the record set in 1992, when unemployment in the state was 8.9 percent. This is up a full percentage point from 7.6 percent in January.

This comes after an announcement that the national unemployment rate reached 8.1 percent for the month of February.

NATIONAL

Obama overturns ban on stem cell research

On March 5, President Barack Obama signed an executive order eliminating the “fetal”-era limits on funding for stem cell research.

According to CNN, Obama’s order supersedes an order signed by Bush in 2001 that prevented the National Institutes of Health from funding research on embryonic stem cells using 60 cell lines that existed at that time.

“The first day they came in there they think it’s impossible to organize this exhibition,” he said. “But then when we do it step by step, we have these dreams, or unrealistic objectives, and acting on them they become real dreams.”

Bailly believed the more the students did on their own, the more they were going to own the project. He gave them complete freedom with his support, realistic objectives, and acting on them they became real dreams.

Others found the lecture to be significant for the Venezuelan community and a message everyone should hear.

“I felt this lecture was very important for the Venezuelan exile community, and for students especially. He presented a historic, systematic and realistic view of our country and the consequences that have been brought on by the government’s decisions,” said Nydia Lemus, a professor of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center.

The lecture was given in the wake of Chavez’s successful referendum to elimi- nate term limits, which would facilitate his running again in 2012. This elimination of term limits now takes precedence over the 12-year presidential term limit, which he sought and obtained in a 1999 referendum, according to the Associated Press.

A candidate for president against Chavez in the December 2006 elections before withdrawing his name, Petkoff said, “I really believe that if you are going to achieve something in your field, something significant, something you will be proud of, it has to be your life,” Bailly said.

The lessons were not lost on the students.

Bailly believes achievement only comes by following through. “It’s not potential, it’s not intention that matters, it’s action,” he said.
gap with up to a 15 percent increase in tuition yielding an estimated $24 million and a differential tuition revenue increase of $10 million. This year, FIU is looking at a gap of 4.1 percent or $11.4 million.

Though the plan is not final, as the actual figures are still unknown, Maidique said the meeting presented their strategy of dealing with the cuts to students, faculty and staff.

Maidique also said that the recently passed stimulus package and what it really brings to the University, as well as the unknown amount of state revenue, are variables that will affect any decisions made.

“We’re perfecting a framework that will allow us to make a decision when we know how hard the hit will be,” he said. “We really don’t have enough information to make final decisions at this point.”

Like last year, cuts will be made strategically rather than cutting programs across the board. Sanchez emphasized that the administration is looking at this crisis over the long term and therefore planning ahead for the next three years.

We believe that we have to manage through this crisis over the long term.

Vivian Sanchez
Chief Financial Officer

“We believe that we have to manage through this crisis over the long term,” she said. “We refuse to look at this crisis in one-year increments.”

Berkman praised the deans that worked and persevered through last year’s cuts and encouraged them to keep looking at their programs and submit suggestions for generating revenue, which are due April 3.

“The deans know their units better than I know their units … and they ought to be the individuals who come up with the plan,” Berkman said.

He presented strategic imperatives that would make it possible for the University to survive, which are the same as last year’s and included:

- FIU as a top 15 public urban research university
- Increase in undergraduate retention and graduation
- Improvement in health and life sciences
- Student life and alumni affinity
- Advancement and human resource development

Last year’s tiers were slightly different, along with their criteria. Arts and sciences, public health, library and medicine were priority one while nursing and hospitality were priority two. Priority four included all centers and institutes, which ended up being cut altogether.

The criteria then were essentially whether the program or department was essential to FIU’s core curriculum or high mission alignment.

On a lighter note, Maidique said that he has high hopes for the University. He mentioned the ranking of the business school as the top one in South Florida in the last issue of Business Week, as well as the baseball team’s 5-0 victory against Troy University on March 6 and the high chance of bringing the largest research team to strengthen the University’s research capability.

“That gives you some points of light that keep me going,” he said.
Row Club and Crew brings back the waves

LORENA ESTRADA  
Staff Writer

With a handful of new club members, coaches Syd McKay and Henry Kupczyk decided to bring back the sport they say has been “swept under the ground.”

The Rowing Club and Crew started rowing again Feb. 23 at Biscayne Bay after being inactive for nearly two years due to the reconstruction of the Aquatic Center. “We’re just hoping that everyone gets our message this year. We were a part of the Biscayne Bay Campus. Give us our home back,” said Kupczyk, assistant coach and captain of the Rowing Club and Crew.

The club, which was founded 15 years ago, used to be located underneath the pool area at the Aquatic Center, until they were asked to leave by the BCC Department of Recreation in June 2007.

The Rowing Club and Crew was then relocated to the Marine Biology building laboratories, where they store their equipment.

“The Marine Biology labs were kind enough to let us get started here,” Kupczyk said.

However, there is one negative aspect about their new location: it is hidden.

“We didn’t have to show up at club fair in the past because our boats were visible to students,” said Kupczyk, who is lobbying to get back to the Aquatic Center. “They would come up and ask about the club on their own.”

When relocated, the club also lost its boathouse, a necessity for the maintenance of equipment. The boats have been sitting outside in the sun for nearly two years, and the sun rays have been damaging their quality and appearance.

“We’re [now] concentrated on boat repair,” McKay said.

Still, McKay and Kupczyk are optimistic about having the club they once used to have, which had up to 30 members and used to compete in regattas, or boat races. In 2003, the rowing club competed in the Indian Creek Regatta at the Ronald W. Shane Watersports Center in Miami Beach against other universities, including University of Miami and University of Florida. The women came in seventh place and the men came in second place, losing to UM.

Students from both campuses are welcomed to sign up to be part of the club; the only requirement is that they know how to swim. Students have to take a demonstration swim test in the Aquatic Center and can begin learning how to row, according to McKay.

“Rowing is a sport in which you work as a team,” said McKay, who has been rowing since the age of 15. “It requires coordination, and it takes people to work.”

The Rowing Club and Crew practices Mondays and Wednesdays at the bay from 4-6 p.m.

Students interested in signing up can contact Henry Kupczyk at crew@fiu.edu.
FOODGASM

Top Chef contestant serves up southern comfort food

I’m back! The South Beach Wine & Food Festival has been over for a few weeks, and I can say that I am back to at least 90 percent functioning.

I even discovered some new foodgasms. This year’s BubbleQ, the festival event that serves up barbecue and champagne, was hosted by “Top Chef” judge Tom Colicchio, and some of the show’s past winners and contestants were barbecuing.

Out of all of the “Top Chef” celebrities at the party, I was mostly interested in season three contestant Howie Klienberg, since he just opened up Bulldog Barbecue (15400 Biscayne Blvd., North Miami).

Before Bulldog’s opening, there was a lack of barbecue presence in North Miami. Klienberg’s interesting concept is bound to be a sure hit for originality in the neighborhood.

Bulldog mixes modern and chic decor with down and dirty southern style, complete with brown paper table cloths and rolls of paper towels bolted into the wall. It gives the restaurant its classy Miami ambiance with stainless steel countertops and red walls reminiscent of a Cajun crawfish boil where food is just tossed on the newsprint paper table top and devoured while wearing a bib.

The atmosphere oozes comfort.

The menu continues the feeling of ease by segmenting choices into untraditional titles. For instance, salads can be found under the “Grass” section of the menu, while the kiddies can eat from the “Puppy Chow” sections. But for the college student on a budget, go for the “Biscuits,” the sandwich selections. But for the college student on a budget, go for the “Biscuits,” the sandwich selections. But for the college student on a budget, go for the “Biscuits,” the sandwich selections. But for the college student on a budget, go for the “Biscuits,” the sandwich selections.

One dish stands out as the top dog – the Black Angus Burger. This burger was definitely a foodgasm and described as “the best burger I’ve had since moving to Miami” by one of my guests.

For $10 you could not possibly find a better burger. This gourmet barbecue tastes fresh and meaty and comes with your choice of cheese, sweet melty-in-your-mouth caramelized onions, creamy chipotle mayo, arugula and a thick slice of tomato. Together, all these components are so delicious that you almost want seconds. But with a hearty side of Chipotle Fries, you will feel like you never want to eat again. I don’t want to subject the Chipotle Fries to merely a side dish mention. These fries are “the fries.” This was the first dish I tried at Bulldog and immediately could tell that this would be a foodgasm I would inevitably come to crave.

I will go back, if just to have these salty, spicy, perfectly cooked – not-too-crispy, not-soggy french fries. Make sure to order a side of the chipotle mayo to dip them into. Don’t be scared by the mention of the chipotle pepper, although these fries – and mayo – carry a little back of the throat spice, the peppercorn imparts a more smoky flavor than anything else.

Go to Bulldog if you want to get full, really full, almost-borderline-Thanksgiving-full because most of the food is delicious, and the portions are so large that you end up licking your plate and your friends’ plate clean. This is what your resident foodgasmist calls comfort food.

I understand, it’s not what you expect from comfort food. Especially not me! Being a Miami native, I know more about café con leche than barbecue, but the Bulldog choices make me want more.

That’s not to say that some menu items don’t belong in the doghouse. I found the foursome of cheeses in the Mac and Cheese overpowering and muddled. And for a soup lover to openly shun both soup choices on the “Smacks” portion of the menu – Shrimp and Corn Chowder, and White Chili – is blasphemy, because I never met a soup I didn’t like.

But to me, these flaws are overly redeemed by the mouth-watering items that lace the menu.

If you stop by on spring break next week and want to splurge, go for the Baby Back Ribs. At $21 for a full rack, these slightly sweet ribs pack their flavorful bark with a savory dry rub. I’m no barbecue expert, but these were a hit with my guests and all that was left on the plate was bones.

For a perfect finish, make sure to end your night with a decadent dessert. My recommendation is the over the top S’more Pie at $7.

The S’more Pie is a melted, gooey chocolate pie with a Graham cracker and rice crispy crust, smothered in a marshmallow cream that is blow torched to give you that campfire feeling. This rich dessert will leave you waddling for the door, with chocolate smeared across your face, the end-all at Bulldog.

Make sure to have a homemade lemonade or sweet iced tea with your meal and enjoy the Southern comfort. I’m surprised to say I’ve added barbecue to my foodgasms.

HBO’s “Def Poetry” artists honor Women’s Month

On Point Poetry Club will celebrate women with spoken word poetry during its upcoming event, “True Beauty of a Woman,” featuring poets from HBO’s “Def Poetry.”

“We want to take time to appreciate women through poetry,” said Anna Pierre-Louis, On Point Poetry member. “True Beauty of a Woman,” sponsored by the On Point Poetry Club and the Student Programming Council, will take place March 12 in the Mary Anne Wolfe Theatre from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. Doors will open at 7 p.m., and the event is free and open to all students, faculty, staff and the general public.

“The average person doesn’t necessarily think of poetry as something fun,” said Pierre-Louis. “But it’s really high energy and enticing.”

Hoping to attract more attendees, On Point Poetry is bringing to the event Maya Del Valle and Gina Loring, poets featured on HBO’s “Def Poetry,” along with student performances from On Point Poetry and Write Side Poets, a non-profit organization designed to gather, inspire, assist and encourage young writers who want to take their message across through spoken word, according to their official Web site.

“I thank HBO for bringing [Shihan, Black Violin, Del Valle and Loring] because otherwise we wouldn’t have the opportunity to meet such greatly talented poets,” said Robert Wouswaart, On Point Poetry president.

The club is co-hosting this event in honor of Women’s History Month, which is celebrated throughout the month of March.

“Women play a significant role in our everyday lives and that’s beautiful,” Toussaint said.

“We just don’t get caught up with outer beauty, because beauty lies within and we want to acknowledge that.”

This is On Point Poetry’s fourth event of the year, but this time they’re bringing recognized poets.

“They are two lovely, talented, energetic, insightful, beautiful women and HBO nationally-known slam poets,” Toussaint said.

The event will also feature Ray Dominguez, president of Write Side Poets and Lindsie Fleurizard, On Point Poetry member.

“(On Point Poetry) is a positive group of students who are enthused about poetry, about the art and we love to entertain. We take no stances, but we express issues in both the positive and negative light,” said Toussaint. “We cater to people’s needs about the variation of poetry we speak.”

For more information, visit myspace.com/onpointpoetry.
If Joe Lieberman decides to run for president in 2012, we can finally stop teaching about the Holocaust in public schools.

After all, if a Jew were made to exterminate the entire race of people, surely we do not want Jewish children thinking that they are worthless because of this story of history. Rather, they should be empowered by the notion of having a member of their own religious group now leads the nation, is actually counterproductive because it diminishes the significance of the progress we have made so far.

“There are stories kids know just how amazing it is that this man is president right now,” said Mark Anthony Neal, a professor of African-American studies at Duke University, to Newsweek.

Eric Feldman

History might really be going down

If [NYU] is doing the right thing with its budget, there should be no need to hide information from anyone.
Michael Steele revamps GOP with smooth talk

With the Republican Party struggling to recover from numerous electoral defeats, only one man is up to the task of leading them. During these trying times, they need a hero and that hero is Michael Steele.

Beset on all sides by a relatively popular president, the king of two straight defeats in federal elections and only one senator keeping them from losing massive amounts Congressional power, the new chairman of the Republican National Committee knows exactly what it will take to revive the GOP.

Two simple words that will change the way we look at the Republican Party and politics itself, and those two words are “hip” and “hop.”

With his trademark boldness and charisma, Steele has promised to appeal to old and young alike by “applying the party’s principles to urban-suburban hip-hop settings,” according to a Feb. 19 article in the Washington Times.

He’s even promised that the changes would be, and this is an actual quote, “off the hook.”

Like a modern day street poet or an MTV veejay, the 51-year-old Steele has the hook.”

“It is the use of such cool urban colloquialisms that really speaks to me and young people everywhere,” said Fox News’ Neil Cavuto.

I’m sure the American people would appreciate his candor if he just came out and said, “I just want to cut your taxes, baby?”

Steele, like the brilliant tactician that he is, has revealed little about his “off the hook” plans to give the GOP more of an urban flavor. Yet the hip-hop culture, as only a Georgetown graduate like Steele could understand it, has so much to bring to the GOP and Republicans have so much to offer in return. The possibilities are nearly endless.

Take Barack Obama’s plans to increase taxes on the wealthy to pay for things like education and health care. One factor conveniently ignored by the Democrats and the liberal media is the effects of such tax increases on our nation’s most precious resource: rappers.

Moreover, the considerable damage done by these tax increases to the images of rappers who have based much of their careers on the benefits of such conspicuous consumption is inaculcable.

Republican economic policy is clearly preferable for rappers who like to “shine,” “ball” and “floss.”

And as Michael Steele has magnificently illustrated, the use of slang makes the Republican agenda seem so much more fun. Who could say no to a congressman or woman smoothly saying, “I just want to cut your taxes, baby?”

House minority leader Lil’ John Boehner would be wise to be a little less like George W. Bush and a little more like the ODB. Perhaps he could lace his remarks to the media with just a little more profanity.

After all, these talks call for honesty and passion, not the restrained remarks of an old-school politician.

I’m sure the American people would appreciate his candor if he just came out and said, “The houzin’ crisis is a f---in’ mess, yo. And the President’s response is hella whack! All you Democrats need to stop this crazy spending before I stick you.”

Such a response would embody the anger felt by many conservatives while simultaneously injecting a much needed “street cred” into the Republican Party.

With the help of visionaries like Michael Steele, the Republican Party stands to win over the young generation and the children, who, I am told, are our future.

And together they can bring the Republicans back to the White House, give money back to the wealthy, and put the “G” back in GOP.

Corralitics takes a stab at all things Capitol Hill every other Wednesday.
Highlights from Relay for Life 2009

**Top:** Students gather to light votive candles in memoriam of cancer victims past. The candles were placed in bags with the victims’ names and used to light up the walkway around the Ryder Business Building for participants throughout the night.

**Left:** Senior Noor Daghistani, a member of Music Saves Lives, dresses up as Cinderella for a Disney Princess themed lap.

**Bottom left:** Student organizations raised money by selling burgers and hotdogs for $2 to donate to the American Cancer Society.

**Bottom right:** The American Cancer Society walks along with their banner in support of cancer survivors during the early hours of Relay for Life’s 15-hour vigil.
Anxiety affects everyone differently, FIU offers help

If I admit that I’ve experienced anxiety just by interacting with other people, my friends would not believe me.

I’ve never been diagnosed with a social anxiety disorder and I probably will never understand because it doesn’t interfere with my daily life enough for me to seek help. However, in years past, I used to get really nervous when dirtied public speaking, talking to strangers and even hanging with friends I had not seen in a while. Of course the worst of these was public speaking, and even today it still makes me a bit nervous.

Although my boyfriend calls me a “hermit crab” – I’ve gradually embraced the name – I’ve gotten a lot better at this social thing. In college, I’ve run from the name – I’ve got a lot better at this social thing. In part, I think a lot of it has to do with growing up and realizing that it’s OK to unwillingly make a fool of myself in front of others. I also think my boyfriend’s calm demeanor has rubbed off on me. In fact, I’m sure I’ve heard him say “relax” just as much as I’ve heard “I love you” come out of his mouth.

Unfortunately there are people who suffer to the point that common social situations such as eating in public, using a public restroom, or speaking in front of others can cause overwhelming fear and anxiety, according to WebMD.com.

Having experienced a rapid heartbeat and sweaty palms at the mere thought of raising hands, or speaking in front of others can cause such as eating in public, using a public restroom, or speaking in front of others can cause overwhelming fear and anxiety, according to WebMD.com.

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FIU stadium to host first round games in Gold Cup

AP WIRE

FIU Athletic Director Pete Garcia in conjunction with CONCACAF announced today that FIU Stadium will host a first round Gold Cup Soccer doubleheader on July 10.

"This is part of the original plan of designing this stadium," Garcia said. "We wanted to host major events at our stadium and we're very excited about being able to be host of a quality event like the Gold Cup."

The CONCACAF Gold Cup will be played in a record 13 different U.S. cities, opening at The Home Depot Center in Los Angeles on Friday, July 3 and concluding with the championship match Sunday, July 26 at Giant Stadium outside New York.

FIU is also in negotiations to bring several other major soccer events to South Florida. "We're excited for both FIU and the entire South Florida soccer community," said Garcia. "Right now we're working on a handful of major soccer events to be held here over the next year."

The 13 cities are more than twice the number previously used for the continental championship and shy of only the 1982 FIFA World Cup in Spain and the 2002 FIFA World Cup, which used 10 venues each in Japan and South Korea. The 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States was played in nine different venues.

"By expanding the Gold Cup to 13 venues, it will give fans more opportunity to experience the championship in person," CONCACAF President Jack Warner said.

The Gold Cup will make its first appearance in four cities: Columbus, Ohio; Phoenix; Philadelphia and Washington. A Gold Cup quarter-final will be the first sporting event to be played at the Cowboys New Stadium.

"This is part of the original plan of designing this stadium. We wanted to host major events at our stadium and we're very excited ..." Pete Garcia, athletic director

FIU

Golden Panthers’ future still looks promising

INCOMPLETE, page 12

An "I" simply wouldn’t work, and I think any other letter designation would be too simple.

I’d say let the jury remain out, and evaluate this squad based on how much better or worse the team is next season.

There was just too much transition and roster turmoil to make a fair or accurate assessment of the 08-09 campaign.

JOIN OUR STAFF!

Stop by one of our offices located in GC 210 and WUC 124.

SPRING INTRAMURAL BASKETBALL STANDINGS

MEN’S OPEN # 1

TEAM OVERALL

We Love Shanes 4-0

Operation Repo 3-1

Lakewater Goons 2-2

Mickey Mouse Club 1-2

Gama Phi Gamma 0-4

MEN’S OPEN # 2

TEAM OVERALL

ESPN 3-1

I Don’t Know Doyog 3-0

Archibalds 0-3

Army ROTC 1-1

Sammy A. S. S. 1-3

MEN’S OPEN # 3

TEAM OVERALL

No Dunshish 4-1

Ballers 4-1

Dark Knight 4-1

Terrorous D 2-3

The Ninja Turtles 1-4

Good Ol’ Days 0-5

MEN’S OPEN # 4

TEAM OVERALL

Big City 3-0

Underestimated 1-1-1

DSU 0-1-1

Undeated 0-1

Choice 0-1

MEN’S OPEN # 5

TEAM OVERALL

Miami Lakes Legends 4-0

The Other Guys 3-2

Huddle...Like Rich Ross 3-1

Here Snowflakes 1-3

Nemesis 1-3

SORORITY/WOMEN’S #1

TEAM OVERALL

Phi Kappa Alpha 4-0

Delta Phi Epsilon 3-2

Alpha Xi Delta 2-3

Phi Sigma Sigma 0-5

SORORITY/WOMEN’S #2

TEAM OVERALL

Kappa Alpha Psi 3-1

Phi Sigma Kappa 3-1-1

Kappa Alpha Psi 3-0-1

Lambeth Theta Phi 1-3

Tau Delta 1-2

FIU 0-4

Sigma Phi Epsilon 0-4

FRATERNITY

TEAM OVERALL

IPO 0-4

Queso Field 0-4

Army Rainbow 0-4

St. John’s 0-4

Ashland 0-4

This is part of the original plan of designing this stadium. We wanted to host major events at our stadium and we’re very excited ... Pete Garcia, athletic director

FIU
The players combined to miss more than 125 games due to injury, the vast majority of which was caused by the projects regulars from last summer starting to develop differently. The team as a whole could not follow the path to their development.

The Hilltoppers led 29-25, but they slowly built a double-digit lead on the Golden Panthers with 5:32 left in the game.

The Hilltoppers were out rebounded 51-34. The team hit 34 percent from the field and the Golden Panthers hit four consecutive shots, but failed to score in the second half. He led the team in scoring with 12 points and was awarded the Player of the Game award for the Golden Panthers.

Senior Alex Galindo could not get his shooting stroke going as he finished 1-of-9 from the field with four points. Fellow sophomore Russell Hicks disrupted the Hilltoppers in the paint but several fouls kept him in the game for just 14 minutes.

We couldn’t make shots, it happens. We had guys with open looks,” Rouco said.

Dominguez kept his team in the game offensively, while the Golden Panthers defense limited the Hilltoppers to just 32 shots. At intermission, the Hilltoppers led 29-25, but they slowly built a double-digit lead on the Golden Panthers with 5:32 left in the game.

For the Hilltoppers, Jeremy Evans led all big men with 10 points. With 4:51 left in the game, Asprilla and Evans ran into each other in the post. An intentional foul by Asprilla made Evans charge at the freshman before his teammates stopped him.

The Hilltoppers’ lead inflated to 20 points less than four minutes later. This was the third meeting between the two teams. The Golden Panthers upset the Hilltoppers at home 67-59 on Jan. 8. Roughly 12 hours after their loss, the Hilltoppers practiced in the U.S. Century Bank Arena before finally leaving Miami.

The Hilltoppers went 12-2 the rest of the season and now will face either the North Texas Mean Green or the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders. Coach Racso’s 2009 season is over but he wanted to know the SBC of the team’s future starting with Asprilla’s development.

“I wouldn’t trade my guys for anything,” Rouco said. “We’re going to be back. The program is headed in the right direction, especially with [Asprilla] who is only a freshman. I don’t think they want to see him mad coming back next year.”

The Golden Panthers men’s basketball team’s misfortunes began during the second round of the Sun Belt Conference Tournament, the rest of the Golden Panthers’ starters began to struggle offensively. “I thought we fell behind early when we couldn’t get our big boy playing. We had to sit him. You can’t beat the No. 1 team when four of your starters go 0-for-22 from the field,” said head coach Sergio Rouco.

The team’s poor shooting performance was too much to overcome, and the Golden Panthers’ (13-20) upset the Hilltoppers (22-8) on March 9 in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Asprilla scored eight points with just seven field goal attempts. The Arkansas.

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Dominguez kept his team in the game offensively, while the Golden Panthers defense limited the Hilltoppers to just 32 shots. At intermission, the Hilltoppers led 29-25, but they slowly built a double-digit lead on the Golden Panthers with 5:32 left in the game.

For the Hilltoppers, Jeremy Evans led all big men with 10 points. With 4:51 left in the game, Asprilla and Evans ran into each other in the post. An intentional foul by Asprilla made Evans charge at the freshman before his teammates stopped him.

The Hilltoppers’ lead inflated to 20 points less than four minutes later. This was the third meeting between the two teams. The Golden Panthers upset the Hilltoppers at home 67-59 on Jan. 8. Roughly 12 hours after their loss, the Hilltoppers practiced in the U.S. Century Bank Arena before finally leaving Miami.

The Hilltoppers went 12-2 the rest of the season and now will face either the North Texas Mean Green or the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders. Coach Racso’s 2009 season is over but he wanted to know the SBC of the team’s future starting with Asprilla’s development.

“I wouldn’t trade my guys for anything,” Rouco said. “We’re going to be back. The program is headed in the right direction, especially with [Asprilla] who is only a freshman. I don’t think they want to see him mad coming back next year.”

The reality is, FIU will next take the floor without its leading shot blocker and leading scorer, but with a wealth of experience ...