Students take steps to resolve global issues

BLANCA MORALES  
Staff Writer

The Clinton Global Initiative began in 2005 and the CGI U, which is the college division, began in 2007. This year’s event will take place April 2010 at the University of Miami. The Web site elaborates on the program’s chief purpose, to form and awaken students into taking steps in solving global issues. The program helps students realize that they have the power to make a significant impact on the world’s future.

The changes to Bright Futures, which became effective Fall 2009, implemented a fixed cost per credit hour and requires students to pay back any classes that were dropped after the drop/add period, according to the Florida Student Financial Aid Web site. During Summer 2009 the University took action to warn students about the changes.

According to the Financial Aid Office in Fall 2008, approximately 18 percent of registered students ended up dropping a class. For Fall 2009 the number decreased, an estimated 12 percent of students registered dropped a class. As of the last week of December 2009, 80 percent of students have been able to repay the classes they dropped.

The changes came as a consequence of the 2009 Florida Legislative budget-trimming process, according to the Florida Student Financial Aid Office. Last semester students at the University were informed of changes in their Bright Futures scholarship: the award is now worth less than before and carries a harsher penalty for dropped courses.

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Students, business leaders, politicians, and others discussed solutions to some of the world’s most critical challenges. "When an opportunity such as the Clinton Global Initiative University came along, I could not think of a more perfect means to accomplish a step in the right direction," said senior Stephanie Lewis, an environmental studies major.

Lewis found out about CGI U from an e-mail sent to her by the University. After looking into it, she felt this program was the best way she could make a difference for the environment.

Last year’s program participants included President Bill Clinton as the host, Natalie Portman, Matthew McConaughey, Paul Begala and Luke Russert. Participating students are challenged to take realistic, concrete steps in solving global issues by proposing a Commitment to Action—a specific, formal plan of action that addresses a particular issue on their campus, in their community, or abroad.

For her Commitment to Action—excluding a pledge to step out and make a difference that must be submitted to

LAST SEMESTER STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY WERE INFORMED OF CHANGES IN THEIR BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP: THE AWARD IS NOW WORTH LESS THAN BEFORE AND CARRIES A HANSCHER PENALTY FOR DROPPED COURSES.

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Francisco Valines, financial aid director, said FIU sent out letters, put up posters outlining the changes and installed pop-up messages in PantherSoft warning students of financial consequences of dropping/adding courses.

"In the long run it has a positive effect, everyone will graduate sooner," Valines said. "The money you would have spent on classes, books, gas money, food and other costs, you would be earning it as soon as you start working."

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Aviator breaks box-office records and fans’ spirits

James Cameron’s completely immersive spectacle “Avatar” may have been a little too real for some fans who say they have experienced depression and sui- cidal thoughts after seeing the film because they long to enjoy the beauty of the alien world Pandora.

On the fan forum, “Aviator Forums,” a topic thread entitled “Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible,” received more than 1,000 posts from people experiencing depression and fans trying to help them cope.

According to CNN, suggestions within the fan forum community for battling feelings of depression after seeing the movie include things like playing Aviator video games or downloading the movie soundtrack, as well as encouraging members to relate to other people outside the virtual realm and to seek out positive and constructive activities.

Cameron’s movie has pulled in more than $1.4 billion at the worldwide box office and could be on track to be the highest grossing film of all time.

Former governor apologizes for racist comments

Former Gov. of Illinois Rod Blagojevich apologized Monday morning for controversial comments he made, in which he compared his Democratic politician to a black man. The comments were made in an interview for Esquire magazine’s February issue, in which the twice-elected Democrat said: “I’m blacker than Barack Obama.”

Rianda: changes only fair

SGC-MMC discuss budget ideas

The Student Government President at Modesto Maidique Campus Anthony Rianda, gave a rate “State of the Student” address at the Jan. 11 senate meeting that asked his fellow members of government what would be their legacy and how it should translate in the new budget.

The address, as designed by Rianda, was more of a question and answer period than a full speech, and served as a precursor to the budget hearings that will be held next month. Much of the address centered around opportunities presented by the as-yet-assembled allocations for the coming fiscal year.

Next year we have a chance with the budget, a chance no one has had before,” Rianda said. “Because no one has had the far reaching vision.

The president asked the SGC-MMC senate to look past simple resolutions that ask to fix things and concentrate on grander ideas that could be developed with proper allocations in the new budget. As an example he used a new computer lab in the engineering building to illustrate the ideas SGA could pursue in the next fiscal year.

“We have $11.6 million,” Rianda said. “And I’ll be as cheap as humanly possible to make sure we get the most bang out of our bucks and everyone else has to be too.”

One area he would like to fix with this grand push is a perceived problem with involvement and school spirit with FIU students. Rianda invoked a Facebook group, “I hate when students at my university wear stuff from other universities,” to illustrate what often happens around the halls.

Aside from personally calling out people that wear emblems from other universities at FIU, Rianda asked the senate “What are we going to do about it?”

Rianda feels he is advocating for would help build a connection with students.

“In this year’s budget we are going to say, ‘as soon as you become a senior, you are going to get bene- fits,’” he said.

Rianda also spoke about getting more from the Florida legislature, especially as they are considering making health insurance mandatory.

“What do we expect from the government to allow themselves to call ourselves a public university and not a student university because we pay for it all,” said the SGC-MMC President.

He did not go into specifics on a game plan with the Florida legisla- ture, but student leaders will head up the Students’ game plan to the University for as part of FIU Day.

Rianda hopes his administration will be remembered as a government that had to deal with many changes but made it work.

“The plan is to be leaving behind?” Rianda asked. “Are they going to remember anything we’ve done, or did we just do it to cool and write it in our resume?”

Initiative accepts student pledges

In the issue dated Jan. 8 2010, the front page graphic depicts Marvin Roberts, not Antoine Watson.

The Beacon will gladly change any errors. Call our UP office at 305-348-2709 or BBC at 305-919-4722.

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**BRIGHT FUTURES, page 1**

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**THE BEACON**

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**02 THE BEACON – Wednesday, January 13, 2010**

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**www.fi usm.com**
**FIU becomes first ‘tree campus’ in state by Arbor Day Foundation**

MELODY REGALADO

The house of blue and gold is going green on all its campuses.

FIU, the first university in the state of Florida to be certified as an official Tree Campus by the Arbor Day Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of trees and promoting education about it.

“It’s a significant step toward being a leader and showing the community and other universities and students that we care about the environment and the impact trees in our daily lives,” said Lucinda Castellanos, director of Operations at the Office of the Vice Provost at BBC and staff representative on the Campus Tree Advisory Committee.

One of the Arbor Day Foundation’s programs, Tree Campus USA, helps “colleges and universities strive to engage their student body as well as their broader community to establish and sustain healthy community forests for the benefit of current and future residents,” according to its web site.

It identifies schools that successfully promote forestry on campus as well as in the community and provides them with a letter, plaque and flag of recognition.

University staff at the Biscayne Bay Campus applied for certification last semester on behalf of all three FIU campuses – Biscayne Bay, Modesto Maidique and the Broward Pines Center – and received notification of its approval Jan. 12.

FIU already met most of the eligibility criteria through its ongoing green initiatives, but it added to its continued efforts to incorporate forestry on campus and in the community.

“SEAS [School of Environment and Society] is supporting this initiative in every way we can,” said Michael Heithaus, director of the School of Environment and Society and faculty representative on the Campus Tree Advisory Committee.

“Increasing the amount of tree cover with native shade trees will help make it a nicer campus for everyone and also for the environment,” said Heithaus.

The Arbor Day Foundation has set five standards for schools to follow to obtain certification, all of which FIU met.

1. Standard 1 is the Campus Tree Advisory Committee: composed of FIU staff, faculty, alumni and a student as well as facility workers and community leaders. They meet to discuss goals and priorities with tree maintenance and awareness.

2. Standard 2 is the Campus Tree Care Plan: goals established by the Campus Tree Advisory Committee.

3. Standard 3 is the Arbor Day Tree Plan: includes activities to improve the quality of life for students on campus.

4. Standard 4 is the Tree Campus Certification Standards: funds set aside for the upkeep of the program on campus every year, including purchasing, maintenance and labor.

5. Standard 5 is the Service Learning Project: for university students to become involved in maintenance and education projects on campus through their courses.

Aside from the impact this has on the earth, such as reducing carbon dioxide, FIU and other tree campuses benefit from more shade and a commitment to a greener lifestyle.

For a list of students, on either campus, FIU’s home, said Vogel. “It’s important to have a good environment for learning, and a part of that is the natural environment, to have pleasant outdoor spaces to learn, play and grow.”

For more information or to get involved, contact Jennifer Grim on jermouth@fiu.edu.
Obama’s approach to terrorism raises lots of eyebrows

Lately, there has been much hand-wringing over President Obama’s anti-terrorism policies. In the wake of the failed terrorist attack on Christmas day, Republican critics have been eagerly attacking the President, who somehow failed to foresee the clear and present danger of terrorists wearing explosive underwear determined to strike Detroit, America’s spiritual and economic center (as of 1956).

Alhaji Umaru Matallab, the would-be terrorist, had been suspected of radical leanings according to ABC News, and likely should have never been allowed to board a plane bound for the United States. At the very least, he should have been forced to check his explosives in at the gate, and pay the $30 fee required for all weapons of mass destruction brought aboard Northwest Airlines flights. Unfortunately, in a terrible failure of U.S. security procedures, he was able to board a flight to the U.S. in a pair of incendiary underwear.

In order to prevent further attacks, the administration has implemented a number of policy changes, yet there are a number of steps President Obama has failed to take that could in fact make America safer, or, at the very least, feel safer.

Plan A: Flight Gowns: In the aftermath of a failed terrorist attack in which a man hid an explosive in his underwear, it may be time to eliminate the threat of conventional clothing altogether. From now on, people could be required to wear paper gowns, like the ones provided at hospitals, on every flight.

Such gowns would make random strip searches easy, and as most people know, there is no hiding a bomb or anything else in those things.

Plus, members of terrorist organizations tend to have conservative social mores and they may shy away from any enterprise that requires them to wear such revealing attire. Yet perhaps this step may not be drastic enough to appease critics.

Plan B: Revive the Bush method of combating terrorism: As the President’s critics in the GOP have said, President Bush would have handled this situation quite differently.

Perhaps Obama could try to emulate his predecessor, and in response to this attack by a man from Yemen, invade a completely unrelated country.

Some in the GOP might point to Iran for a consistently successful show. For a show like “The Jay Leno Show” re-runs along with extended coverage of the 2010 Olympics. NBC Manager Jeff Gaspin has said that “Law and Order” re-runs will fill the slot just before NBC airs the Super Bowl. These overnight shows are a great way to ensure that another terrorist attack will never happen again in the U.S.

Or what about “Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip”? Or “My Name is Earl”? This is obviously a network that has no taste when it comes to maintaining quality shows. Perhaps the American public wasn’t ready for late night to go primetime. Or perhaps, NBC is run by 5-year-old children with no future outlook on their network.

The victim in all of this however is none other than Conan O’Brien. O’Brien, who hosted “Late Night” for over 15 years has committed to NBC for the gig that he’s undoubtedly coveted for some time. “The Tonight Show” is a show that is filled with the legacy of greats like Jack Parr and Johnny Carson. O’Brien’s future must have seemed set, with his wife and children in California and a new set built. Now Jeff Gaspin is trying to convince O’Brien to move back to 12:05 a.m. to slot allow Leno to start at 11:35 p.m. If I were O’Brien, I would be calling Fox right about now.

LATE NIGHT SHAKE-UP

Perhaps the American public wasn’t ready for late night to go primetime. Or perhaps, NBC is run by 5-year-old children.

NBC makes rash decision by moving Leno to primetime

DAVID A. BARRIOS
Opinion Editor

The great experiment is officially over. NBC announced on Jan. 10 that “The Jay Leno Show” would be taken off the air in February following extremely low ratings after its smash premiere in September last year – and not a moment too soon.

Leno’s show is set to have its finale just before NBC airs the 2010 Olympics. NBC Manager Jeff Gaspin has said that “Law and Order” re-runs will fill the slot just before NBC airs the Super Bowl. These overnight shows are a great way to ensure that another terrorist attack will never happen again in the U.S.

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www.fi usm.com
Wednesday, January 13, 2010
Avatar sparks debate over perceived racist messages

JESSE WASHINGTON
Associated Press

Near the end of the hit film Avatar, the villain snarls at the hero, “How does it feel to betray your own race?” Both men are white — although the hero is inhabiting a blue-skinned, 9-foot-tall, long-tailed alien.

Strange as it may seem for a film that pits greedy, immoral humans against noble alien, the villain snarls at the hero, “How does it feel to betray your own race?”

Since the film opened to widespread critical acclaim three weeks ago, hundreds of blog posts, newspaper articles, tweets and YouTube videos have made claims such as that the film is “a fantasy about the reality that all humans are actually one race?”

The film’s writer and director, James Cameron, says the real theme is about respecting others’ differences.

The film’s writer and director, James Cameron, says the real theme is about respecting others’ differences.

In the film (read no further if you don’t want to spoil the plot) a white, paralyzed Marine, Jake Sully, is mentally linked to an alien’s body and set loose on the planet Pandora to a song, which is then dubbed with lip-syncing and audio dubbing.

The event has its own Facebook group, which is updated regularly for anyone out there looking to keep track of the production progress.

Films.

Bogle stopped short, however, of calling the movie racist.

“Is Cameron actually exposing the real heroine because she, not Sully, kills the arch-villain? Does it matter that many conservatives are riled by what they call liberal environmental and antimilitary messages?”

Bogle said that he envisioned the film as a “stunning” work.

“But the real argument is that he’s been trying to make a point about the need to save the Na’vi world, and that the Na’vi world is a metaphor for the world we live in.”

The diversity seen within the film’s cast demonstrates this goal.

“Let’s Get It Started,” are the proposed words to the Facebook group and is taking this to cyberspace through FIU’s "I Am FIU" video, so I thought this would be a great project to be a part of since the first one had such a cool idea backing it,” she said.

Heading the production is FIU alumna and Director of Marketing & New Media, Eduardo Merille. Beginning the project just before the holiday season began, he quickly enlisted a significant number of followers on the Facebook group and is taking this project very seriously.

“Avatar” is the culmination of the production of distortion,” he said. "It’s a movie that has been criticized by a small but vocal group of people who allege it contains racist messages.

Bogle said he can understand why people would be troubled by Avatar, although he praised it as a “stunning” work.

“Being a part of the segment of the audience is carrying in the back of its head some sense of movie history,” said Bogle, author of Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in America wiped out the Indians. The film also is an obvious reference to the "I Am FIU" video, so I thought this would be a great project to be a part of since the first one had such a cool idea backing it,” she said.

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Life after Batman: mediocre at best

Of all the events that occurred in DC’s Final Crisis, one of the most devastating outcomes was the death of Bruce Wayne.

Gotham City has been left without its Dark Knight, and the ailing Justice League of America is missing yet another important hero.

As we mentioned last week, it’s hard to keep caring about the death of comic book heroes when it’s obvious they’re just going to keep coming back.

Still, one of the more interesting things to look at when a major hero dies is the immediate circle of friends and apprentices that he leaves behind.

With Bruce Wayne gone, Dick Grayson, formerly Nightwing, has put on the cowl and assumed the role of Batman. Damien Wayne, Bruce’s son, has taken on the mantle of Robin and now serves as Dick’s sidekick.

The story with the most potential, however, is Tim Wayne, the adopted son of Bruce Wayne.

Leaving Damien to take over his old role as Robin, Tim takes on the mantle of Red Robin.

Tim is the only person convinced that Bruce is still alive. At first we’re presented with a touching and compelling story of someone looking to defy the odds and find a hero that everyone else has given up on, but then we’re led through a winding mess of irrelevance.

Feeling betrayed by a world that is so quick to accept Bruce’s death and move on, Tim begins a solitary journey to find his mentor and father.

His journey takes him to Europe, where Christopher Yost quickly muddles the focus of the Red Robin series.

Tim becomes entangled with Ra’s al Ghul, who also believes that Bruce is alive and plans to use Tim as a pawn in order to get Bruce for his own plans.

Tim decides to play along with Ra’s game and accepts an offer to join the League of Assassins in order to help them fight the Council of Spiders, an enemy of the league.

Tim decides this is a perfect opportunity to get access to Ra’s resources and take the League down from within.

If this sounds convoluted and far-fetched, that’s because it is.

After successfully fighting off the Council of Spiders, Tim is able to blow up various hideouts of the League of Assassins by overloading its network, because things explode when a network is congested, apparently.

Despite the mediocre story, the most frustrating thing about Red Robin is the wasted potential. In fact, the most touching point in Tim’s tale hasn’t even come from his own series.

In Adventure Comics, Conner “Superboy” Kent travels to Europe to see how his best friend is doing.

Conner and Tim exchange a heartfelt conversation where Conner pokes and prods at Tim to reveal his true feelings and motives.

Conner points out that Tim is wearing Jason Todd’s costume: the “bad” Robin. The heavy, leather cowl and isolation are just methods of punishing himself until Bruce Wayne returns.

There is some hope on the horizon of this series, however.

With Ra’s al Ghul threatening to attack Wayne Industries in response to the attack on his League of Assassins, Tim is forced to return to Gotham City to protect his father’s company and rejoin the midst of the Batcave.

With the Red Robin series potentially getting back on track and DC officially announcing Bruce Wayne’s return in an upcoming limited series starting in April, there’s going to be plenty of chances for this series to redeem itself and for Tim Wayne’s story to have the meaningful spotlight it deserves.

Panel Panel is a weekly comics column written in tandem by Sean Gonzalez and Pablo Penton. Look for it every Wednesday.

School of Music showcases Viennese-inspired compositions

ASHLEY CAPO Staff Writer

The FIU School of Music kicks off 2010 with a concert event Jan. 14 titled “From Gold to Silver: a Viennese Soiree” at the Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center Concert Hall.

The concert will feature students of the FIU Opera Workshop, a course at the University that exposes students to contemporary literature and performance.

The works of three influential European composers of the late 1800s, early 1900s, will be showcased.

Viennese composers, Johann Strauss Jr. and Karl Michael Ziehrer, known rivals of their time, and Hungarian composer Franz Lehar, Lehar’s best known masterpiece, “Gold and Silver,” inspired the name for the event as it was written for the Princess Pauline von Metternich’s Gold and Silver ball in Jan. of 1902.

Directing the works will be Robert B. Dudas, associate professor of music and founder/director of the Opera Theater at FIU, and Jennifer Renee Snyder, a member of the School of Music staff who will act as the voice and opera coach.

Joel Galand, professor of music history, will be hosting the event.

The concert doors will open at 7 p.m. at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center. Jan. 14.

Tickets will be sold at $10 for students, $15 for FIU faculty, staff and seniors; $25 general admission.

You may purchase your tickets at the School of Music box office or you can purchase tickets online www.carta.fiu.edu.

Be sure to check out the events calendar for all concert dates and all other performances being held by the College of Architecture and the Arts.

Diversions

COLD FRONT

To solve the sudoku puzzle, every row, column and 3x3 box must contain the numbers 1-9 only once.

Check your answers in Friday’s issue.

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy

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FIU faces tough road matchup

STEPHANIE GABRIEL  Asst. Sports Director

The FIU women’s basketball team will hit the road in an attempt to defeat the reigning Sun Belt Conference champion Middle Tennessee on Jan. 13.

The Lightning Blue Raiders have won five straight games and are 15-2 for the season, including a 95-57 victory over the Golden Panthers in the first meeting.

“We believe the school is standing by its findings,” Thomas said. “We continue as of late energy and court awareness. The coach said it would be best for the program to keep the current staff together.

“One that’s not difficult for me,” Leavitt said.

OFFENSIVE DEFENSE

GOLDEN PANTHERS OFFENSIVE WOES CONTINUE AS OF LATE

MEN’S, page 8

After giving up 84 points to Troy in a loss at home on Jan. 9, FIU continued to give up points at an alarming rate. The Golden Panthers allow the most points in the Sun Belt Conference at 77.

USF coach threatens legal action

FRED GOODALL  Associated Press

Former South Florida football coach Jim Leavitt wants his job back, insisting his dismissal for allegedly striking one of his players and then lying about the incident was unwarranted.

Leavitt was fired last week after a university investigation concluded he grabbed one of his players by the throat, slapped a player, and then lying about the incident.

“Based upon the facts (rather than the conclusions) of the university’s investigation,” the statement continued, “coach Leavitt’s termination is unwarranted, and he deserves to be immediately reinstated in full to his former position.”

Citing Miller’s father later backtracked, telling reporters the coach did not strike his son but rather grabbed him by the shoulder pads while trying to motivate the player.

Miller’s father later backtracked, telling reporters the coach did not strike his son but rather grabbed him by the shoulder pads while trying to motivate the player.

The defeat marked the team’s first SBC loss of the season.

Clark was successful once again, even after missing the two previous games, with 24 points and 10 rebounds.

Middle Tennessee holds a scoring advantage with a conference-high 69.7 points per game while FIU is averaging just over 60.

The Golden Panthers have also struggled from beyond the arc lately going 10-for-37 over the past two games, both of which have been losses.

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JOEL DELGADO
Asst. Sports Director

While most of South Florida tried to hide from the cold this weekend, the Golden Panthers swimming and diving team was forced to take on the elements in back-to-back meets over the weekend.

"Bad," Coach Noemi Lang-Zaharia summed up the meets in one word. "It's been such an extreme that we were just trying to stay warm and not get injured. It's been tough on everybody."

FU, VS. WP & IRSC

The Golden Panthers hosted Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Indiana River State College on Jan. 8 at home and wound up with mixed results, defeating WP by a score of 153-23 while IRSC narrowly came out on top with a 108-80 win over FIU.

Namiko Shibata finished first in both the 3-meter and 1-meter diving events while attaining an NCAA Diving Zone qualifying mark with a 286.95 score on the 1-meter.

FIU also found success in the 200-yard medley, coming in first place against WP while coming in second against IRSC with a time of 1:56.09.

The squad would continue to dominate WP with first place finishes coming.

FIU VS. FLORIDA ATLANTIC

The Golden Panthers traveled up to the Turnpike the next day to take on conference rival Florida Atlantic in Boca Raton. The Owls proved to be too much, defeating FIU 135-87.

Shibata picked up where she left off the day before, finishing the day with first place finishes in both the 3-meter and the 1-meter diving events.

Carrie Foster, Kelly Grace, Kariann Stevens and Mariangela Macchiavello combined for a first place finish in the 200-yard freestyle relay to finish the meet on a high note.

"I'm proud of them for doing their best in this weather," Zaharia said of her team. "We have a tough team and everybody supports each other. We're hoping for some warm weather this weekend."