FIU opens virtual
Second Life campus

RUSSELL QUINOA
Contributing Writer

Second Life, a virtual world where residents interact with each other through avatars, has brought mixed reviews from teachers and students at FIU and across state schools.

Second Life is a seven-year-old virtual world created by Linden Lab, in which avatars lease “islands” for real-life purposes— to sell products, conduct classes, do research, hold conferences, and even recruit for admissions. Second Life is being used as a platform for education at many state universities across Florida, including FIU, UCF and UF.

There are over one hundred regions of the virtual world used for educational purposes covering subjects such as chemistry and English. There are several teachers at FIU that are implementing it into their coursework. Instructors in Second Life favor it as a learning tool that will be teaching how to play in a freeform way.

Ronald Lee, a professor for Decision Sciences and Information Systems in the College of Business Administration, has said, “Working in teams is the idea of Second Life will allow students to gain command of music terminology, historical context of the lives of the most important composers in the history of music and virtual playing dexterity by students with the wide variety of instruments of the symphony.”

Several complaints from students regarding problems with the speed of the platform have left mixed opinions on Second Life across the state. “The idea of video games as school is cool,” said Dave Adams, 18, undecided major at FIU.

While Clair Gibson, Accounting major at UCF, said, “I hated every moment on it, it ran so slowly and it froze often.”

Business Administration student at UCF, Austin Suarez, 20, said about using Second Life, “I like the way above its time but the end product isn’t there yet. It feels like you have to take a semester just to learn it, you’re taking an English class but you spend all your time mastering computers.”

New educational institutions have emerged, operating exclusively within Second Life, taking advantage of the platform to deliver content to a worldwide audience at low cost.
Renovations come to Graham Center

Among the changes, the old carpet of GC’s eating area has been replaced by tiles, while new tables and chairs have been installed. The construction procedure lasted seven days, and increased the capacity of seated persons in 30%. Also, these additions include new power outlets for laptops, as well as different number of seats per table.

College of Arts and Sciences is awarded grant

The College of Arts and Sciences has been chosen to receive a grant of $1 million from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute which will benefit the implementation of modeling instruction in the biology and chemistry programs.

Wartzok named permanent University Provost

University President Mark Rosenberg has declared the search for Provost of the University over; officially announcing Douglas Wartzok as University Provost on a permanent basis.

In an e-mail to the University community Rosenberg praised Wartzok for what he called a “strong and determined hand” in getting FIU through the Reaffirmation of Accreditation of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as well as initiating FIU’s new strategic planning process, Worlds Ahead.

—— For more on these stories and others, check out our continued coverage at FIUSM.com.
When Turtle Thomas and Beth McClendon were hired to coach their respective teams in the summer of 2007, it seemed like two different approaches were being made to fill the coaching voids in the baseball and softball programs. Thomas was a well-regarded veteran assistant, while McClendon was a young pitching coach who starred on the diamond at the University of Florida as recently as last decade.

Thomas had a pedigree that included 30 years of experience as an assistant at powerhouse programs such as Miami (FL) and LSU, and a sparkling reputation as a recruiter. He made 14 appearances at the College World Series in his career. Meanwhile McClendon spent just five seasons at Houston coaching a pitching staff that led the Cougars to a couple of Conference USA titles.

Ironically, it’s hard to point out any differences in their accomplishments at FIU since they took over in 2007 though. The recent rise of their respective teams and many of the details in between are synonymous.

In the 2010 season, Thomas’ baseball team made the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2002. McClendon’s softball team made their first NCAA tournament appearance since 2003.

Both teams featured the Sun Belt Conference freshmen of the year in Jabari Henry and Brie Rojas. Both teams had outstanding individual seasons from sophomore stars in Garrett Wittels and Ashley McClain, who garnered SBC player of the year honors.

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And heading into next season, both teams will have to replace a pair of senior aces in Scott Rembisz and Kasey Barrett.

RECRUITING

The departures of Rembisz and Barret shouldn’t stroke a nerve in Golden Panther followers hopes of a deep postseason run next season, or the one after. You see, Thomas and McClendon have both made their marks in the SBC as outstanding recruiters who have built two of the best young cores in their sports for the next few seasons.

At the softball complex, junior Jennifer Gniadek is prepared to take Barret’s place as the ace of the staff, while juniors like R.J Fondon and Aaron Arboleya showed enough promise in 2009 to potentially replace Rembisz.

But the reinforcements are on the way. McClendon reeled in Mariah Dawson as part of her 2010 signing class, a standout pitcher who rewrote the state of Washington’s strikeout record.

Unfortunately for Thomas, he will likely lose some of his recruits to major league baseball organizations, as he saw Manny Machado and Kellin Deglan, the two best prospects of his 2011 class, go in the first round of the MLB first year player draft. However, that likely won’t deter the team from contention with the pieces that are already in place.

In Kayla Burri, Jessy Alfonso, Rudy Flores, Mike Martinez and more, the stars will be aligning on FIU’s diamonds next season.

SIMILARITIES

Thomas and McClendon will be fighting for the same conference crown every season, and pulling for recruits against state powerhouses like UF, Miami, and Florida State as well. The two could also be receiving interest from more established programs in the coming off seasons too.

About the only notable difference in the results they have provided up to now at FIU is their backgrounds, with Thomas’ reputation as a hitting wiz and McClendon being a respected pitching teacher.

Those differences, for as long as these two coaches are here, will only be in the background. Next season, McClendon and Thomas could share another similarity: College World Series.
IGOR MELLO
Contributing Writer

The Randy Horner era is set to begin July 1. His mission is to turn around a struggling swimming and diving program.

Horner was hired in late May, and will become the second swimming and diving coach in FIU history, replacing Noemi Lung-Zaharia, who served seven seasons as coach.

“I am thrilled with the opportunity to coach at FIU,” said Horner, according to fiusports.com. “This is a program that has incredible potential and I look forward to the challenges ahead...I want to bring success to this program and put FIU swimming and diving among the nation’s elite.”

Horner was unavailable for comment with The Beacon.

He will have the chance to turn the swimming and diving team around after finishing second-to-last in the Sun Belt Conference the past two seasons.

Horner served three seasons at University of New Orleans as the men’s and women’s coach, where his men’s team broke all 18 school records in swimming on both the men’s and women’s squad. Despite rewriting the record books at UNO, his teams finished fifth, just slightly ahead of FIU in the overall Sun Belt Conference standings.

According to CollegeSwimming.com, Horner’s first men’s recruiting class at UNO was ranked 18 in the nation. Horner will have a chance to begin recruiting on July 1, where he will officially begin to serve his duties as head coach.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS RATE

FIU falls under NCAA standards

JONATHAN RAMOS
Sports Director

The NCAA released its annual Academic Progress Rate (APR) report on June 4, and found FIU to have the seven teams sanctioned, joining Southeastern Louisiana with the most in Division I.

The report also demonstrates, however, that FIU has shown steady improvement with some of its teams. The APR scores are calculated on a four-year rolling period, with a perfect score being 1000 and the minimum to stay clear of penalties at 925.

For the Golden Panthers, the great news came in the form of the four programs who achieved perfect scores for the 2008-09 year, which included women’s tennis, women’s golf, women’s volleyball and men’s cross country.

There was also positive news for the Golden Panthers when every team except for women’s basketball, women’s cross country, men’s track, and men’s soccer met the required score of 925 in 2008-09. However, since APR penalties for scores over a four year period, and the four aforementioned teams did not meet the required minimum score, there were some penalties in order for FIU.

Of the seven teams facing issues, only the baseball team received a significant loss, when despite its 2008-09 score of 975, still owns a multi-year score of 980. Baseball will be limited to 18 hours of countable activity per week, according to the NCAA.

Among the other penalties, men’s soccer, men’s indoor and outdoor track, women’s indoor and outdoor track and women’s cross country were given a small percentage of scholarship losses.
Students to create solar-powered home for design contest

ADRIAN ESPINOSA
Staff Writer

The Paul Cejas Architecture building was buzzing with conversation.

Walking inside of the almost empty studio, the FIU decathlon team was fiercely discussing some of the finer details of their project. Made up of graduate and undergraduate students from many disciplines, the group is engaged in a competition being held by the U.S. Department of Energy to build a cost and energy efficient home, run entirely on the sun’s energy.

The Department of Energy is on the lookout for new innovations and techniques that are oriented towards a greener future.

The nation’s energy trend is currently shifting to end dependency on oil and other standard energy sources. Through the competition they are choosing the house that best demonstrates the potential of efficient living. The FIU decathlon team is not only in a global contest, but they are part of the worldwide ecologically mindful community who are coming out with new ideas to clean the planet.

The house must be visually attractive and must be designed so that it can be assembled and disassembled quickly, the reason for that being the house must be assembled somewhere on the Modesto Maidique Campus, then transported some 1,000 or so miles to the National Mall for a series of ten contests. Once there, it will be placed beside the twenty other houses being showcased from all over the world. Each house follows the same guidelines but must be built for the environment where the teams are from.

The competition is a somewhat exclusive one, with only 20 worldwide teams participating and a thorough choosing process that screens drafts sent in by applicant schools. FIU was notified of their qualification at the end of the 2010 spring semester and has been hard at work detailing their prospective design.

“I’ve never been part of an actual design and built project before, I’m really excited to be part of this globally known competition,” says Susana Neira, who is currently a Graduate student working on her Master’s in Architecture.

The house that they have been working on is a direct adaptation to the Miami climate and uses a very intricate system of loofters and water pipes and other varied methods to control the temperature.

The open-air house is a square structure with a living area surrounding a central mechanical console, which holds many of the house’s essential machines. The PerFORM[D]ance House, as it’s called, is a reference to the home’s ability to respond to changes in energy needs in order for it to run as efficiently as possible. The energy is all accumulated from the solar panels on the roof and then rationed out among the houses appliances.

Any unused energy is saved in the mechanical room where a series of large batteries hold the electricity. Eventually the energy saved would be transferred to other hypothetical house who are lacking in energy. The house has to work under very demanding rules and because of this the subtle regulation of energy uses very unconventional and innovative methods. From the tile floors to the glass windows and the white exterior paint, the house is meticulously designed to revitalize every aspect of contemporary living.

“I feel this project will highly publish the new ideas and options for South Florida private home owners, it will showcase what a single family home can provide beyond the standard while still being affordable,” Said Andy Madonna the project manager, graduating in 2011 with a master’s in Architecture.

The entire house is meant to work as an individual unit without needing to be linked to a larger grid system. This enables the house to be completely self-sufficient while at the same time providing it’s dwellers with a comfortable and inexpensive lifestyle.

Most importantly it must...
Eco-friendly home event

from GREEN, page 5

be sustainable, a term put simply by Susanne Shiffer, the Project Manual Coordinator. “Sustainability means that the structure leaves no ecological or carbon footprint on the planet.”

When the house is sent over for judging to Washington D.C. it will go through a series of ten competitions to prove its proficiency in certain areas. Between energy balancing, and home entertainment, hot water generation, and market appeal, these entertainments were chosen.

“The intensity analysis is meant to ensure overall practicality of the house so that it can be something to mass-produce in the coming years when global green conscious living becomes a reality. The life of June Havens (Diaz) is turned upside down when he meets Roy Miller (Cruise), a rogue secret agent who is holding a self-powered super battery that could run the power of a small town. Within the coming semesters FIU can hope to see the PerFORM[D]ance house on campus before it’s slapped off to the Nation’s capital. Until then the team will be hard at work to perfect their house, hoping to make it a staple in this eco-friendly generation.

MARRIAGE: Tom Cruise is playing a character that could have been a rip-off of his Mission Impossible character, Ethan Hunt. At the same time, he does not take his character too seriously as Cruise tries to have as much fun as he can have with this role.

Cameron Diaz, on the other hand, is playing the role of the dumb blonde that she has played several times in other movies such as The Sweetest Thing and What Happens in Vegas. Midway through the movie and after nearly escaping death several times, Roy tells June not to leave the hotel they are staying in and she does the opposite by following him to a secret rendezvous. The chemistry between Cruise and Diaz is interesting to see as the movie progresses, but it gets more and more obvious that the movie will have a happy ending for the couple.

THE STORY: The story of the film takes a backseat to Diaz and Cruise because most of the movie’s structure borrows certain elements from other films whether it is the couple-on-the-run (North By Northwest) or the renegade spy chased by his former employers (The Bourne films). There is also a scene in the film where June visits the residence of an old couple (Celia Watson and Dale Dye) that reveals a back-story for Roy that ruins Roy’s mysterious aspect.

However, the action and fight sequences are well choreographed especially in the scenes where Roy takes on a plane full of assassins and the couple is chased by bad guys in the middle of the Running of the Bulls event in Spain. The most frustrating thing about watching this film is that the majority of the action sequences that occur in the movie have already been exposed for a great length of time through the film’s promotional campaign.

Based on that, anyone who plans to see Knight and Day or has an interest in this film should avoid seeing the film’s trailer and/or any further television sneak peeks. Knight and Day has a solid start within the first twenty minutes and vivid action sequences, but it has a predictable storyline that borrows certain elements from other spy movies. Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz share an interesting chemistry, but they individually do not bring anything new to the table.

FIU Theater Kicks Off Alternative Theater Fest with “Top Girls”

MARIA MURRIEL Staff Writer

As the days of June start to get into the 20s and the heat grows truly unbearable, FIU summer students get into a summer-induced performance frenzy. This year, the results of their creative outbursts will beget the Alternative Theater Summer Festival 2010.

Since 2006, the ATSF’s mark has been one major play for the summer, with previous years’ selections including productions such as a “Midsummer Night’s Dream” and the hilarious “Reefer Madness.” This year, however, student director Philip Church and Marina Pareja have extended the FIU community’s Alternative Theater experience to three major plays.

“This is a big move forward,” Church told News@FIU.

The ATSF team has been hard at work in all sorts of theater productions, including an event staged by the FIU alumnus in a college across the pond.

Besides their presence in England’s Solent University of Southampton, Church directs his student actors in humanistic endeavors around the Miami area. After performing in Coral Gables for the National Day of Observance for Human Trafficking this past January, ATSF has begun planning an event in the benefit of Haiti later this year.

Among their numerous projects, Church and Pareja have supervised this year’s Summer Festival, the first where students get the opportunity to not only perform, but also design and direct not one, but three major plays. First, “Top Girls,” followed by “A Bicycle Country” and “Prodigal: The Execution of William Spencer.” According to Church, all plays are of a different style and genre than one another, designed to showcase the “versatility of [the] young actors at work.”

Starting on Wednesday, June 23, the ATSF will premiere “Top Girls,” a “true celebration of feminine charm” directed by FIU theater student Shani Bernard. The play, running for one week only, promises to deliver an insightful perspective on a successful working woman’s reflection of her life away from home and the things she sacrificed for her success; consulting dinner guests from the past, of course.

Church described it as a “funny and poignant” look into several women’s attempts to shatter the glass ceiling throughout history. “Top Girls,” written by English dramatist Caryl Churchill in the 1980s, is a quintessential display of themes that are persistent in the author’s works: sexual politics, abuse of power and modernist feminist issues. It was recently performed in New York during the theater season and it’s been a piece lauded by critics since its creation.

The FIU “Top Girls” cast, then, has big shoes to fill. Though, with all their experience and the international renown they are building for themselves, a spectacular performance should come to them as a breeze.

Director Bernard, along with her cast and crew, has been rehearsing for the past week in preparation to the big premiere, which will no doubt be a sterling success.

“Top Girls” will run at DM 150 from Wednesday, June 23, to Sunday, June 27. Shows start at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and at 5 p.m. on Sunday evening.

The doors will open an hour prior to the show every day, and tickets are $10 at the box office.

THE BEACON REVIEWS: KNIGHT AND DAY

STEVEN MESA Staff Writer

In their new movie Knight and Day, Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz reunite once again with even longer screen time together than the last movie they were in, which was Sinalo Sally in 2001.

The life of June Havens (Diaz) is turned upside down when he meets Roy Miller (Cruise), a rogue secret agent who is holding a self-powered super battery that could run the power of a small town. Within the coming semesters FIU can hope to see the PerFORM[D]ance house on campus before it’s slapped off to the Nation’s capital. Until then the team will be hard at work to perfect their house, hoping to make it a staple in this eco-friendly generation.

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Facebook: Our new Big Brother?

A brawl over complicated privacy settings has Facebook's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, in the hot seat. As he downs a coffee and makes privacy settings easier to use, I lead that Facebook users act as moles and investigate on their own. The problems in that respect are too long and phrased in eloquent terms that the average person does not understand. The privacy policy is just as difficult to read through; it might as well be a homework assignment. The ease of speaking through the website has most users clicking yes to anything in the way of arriving at their Facebook addiction.

This modern-day issue presents problems as to whether your agreement can actually be accepted. It's similar to a contract a candidate assumes when signed by an inbred individual. However, because most people are not internet-savvy, the terms of agreement by signing with Facebook should be viewed just like any other valid contract.

We must be responsible for our actions. Just as we protect ourselves by reading a lease before signing, we must apply the same real world concept to Internet contracts.

The dissatisfaction of users followed the introduction of the Instant Personalization feature and Facebook Platform, which allowed outside websites to access your information and link to your page. Its introduction to Facebook was quick and visually benign. It simply linked pictures on profiles to accompany likes and interests.

Facebook is trustworthy if users take the time to customize their privacy settings. Facebook has proven to be quite responsive to all complaints.

What many did not know is that it also linked behavioral marketing analysis prac-tical to profiles. The theory is that where one song is chosen and an entire radio station is created. Although, instead of music, it targets you with advertisements. Though many were upset about this, I enjoy having ads that target my interests. For example, if I like diving, it is more bene-ficial and not the Bahamas instead of an ad about a hunting safari. Zuckerberg claimed that his in-tentions for creating this system were not finan-cial, he was attempting to make the website more personal for the individual.

Another goal set by President Rosenberg during the Gulf spill is just collateral damage

A major goal set by President Rosenberg during the Gulf spill is just collateral damage.
Stefanie Browne, a student at MMC, said, “I have been an International Relations student, and even before I became senator over here, I have seen things on campus that weren’t the way that they were supposed to be.”

Ivanov stressed that his aim is to increase student participation and that his role is to represent student needs and then offer solutions.

“We should act like FIU, not two separate campuses,” Ivanov said.

The new senator promises to work with his fellow legislative members to identify student body needs and then offer solutions.

Ivanov plans to administer a survey for MMC to determine whether students would take more courses at BBC, should they become available.

Ivanov feels he is qualified to attack this issue among others as senator-at-large.

“I have been an International Relations student, and even before I became senator over here, I have seen things on campus that weren’t the way that they were supposed to be,” Ivanov said.

Ivanov added that his friends have spoken to him about certain issues that, as senator-at-large, he is trying to address.

“I have always been somebody that cares about the interest of the majority, the student body, versus my own interests, which is not what I’m here for,” Ivanov said.

Denise Halpin, SGC-BBC vice president, and Battle interviewed Ivanov before he was able to fully start for the position.

“I am a self-made during the South Florida Collegiate Programming Expo June 18 sponsored by the Office of Campus Life and Orientation.

The interview is but one step in the process of appointing a senator. After an application process, the SGC president and vice president hold interviews with the applicants, ending with the nomination of candidates they feel are most qualified.

“We thought that Deyan would be a great senator-at-large, but we of course did not put him in power,” Halpin said.

Battle and Halpin believe the senators are a direct representation of the student body, of the different programs and majors, allowing them to cast votes on students’ behalf.

Ivanov said that as long as there is someone that is doing what needs to be done and represent the will of the student body, that is all that matters.

“It doesn’t matter how the position was acquired,” Ivanov said.

Rec Center introduces physical consultations

She first started with a small survey that was given out from the front desk of the gym – simple questions on the viability of a program like this. Many students said they would become interested in knowing more about their personal body weight and facts without having to pay an expensive medical or gym fee.

Within a few weeks she started to email those students interested in the program. She sent them out a blank three day nutrition diary where they would need to fill in their daily intake, which she later compared to the U.S. Department of Agriculture dietary guidelines to make sure they were meeting the requirements based on the initial body assessment done.

Students would have to come back on preferably a weekly basis because it’s a better way of tracking their weight loss or weight gain, depending on what the intention was.

“A third of adolescents are overweight and this is one way to make people conscious of not only the fitness aspect of going to the gym but also the health aspect,” Weissman said.

Shaw, who attended the university for his master’s degree in sports management, gave Weissman the freedom to run this program.

“A student’s college career does not have to be filled with junk food options and having a nutritionist on the site helps the students become aware of the options for their diet,” Shaw said.

Weissman has worked as a personal trainer for three years so she is aware of the different techniques that would help different individuals complete their fitness goals. Men come into the gym knowing the different exercise routines that benefit them so throughout this program, her personal training expertise has mainly gone to women who aren’t aware of what fitness routine benefits them.

“The fact that this program is being offered and is free is a huge benefit to students,” Weissman said. “Most insurance companies charge for a nutrition consultation as well as having to be diagnosed with a certain condition in order to see a dietician.”

“This is valuable information that will help students be healthier in body and mind,” Shaw said.

Although she hopes to graduate in December, Weissman’s enjoyed her work. By fall 2010, she hopes that the Recreation Center will keep on running this helpful program to teach students the real facts about diet and exercise.

Weissman said she hopes Carlos Uriolao, who will take Jeff’s place come Summer B, can continue to see the progression of the students who signed up just a few weeks ago.

Weissman said she would have loved to see the change of people who are coming back for their results but understands that she can’t.

“I know that the people who signed up for these consultations have seen results,” Weissman said. “I’m glad I was part of that.”

For more information about the consultations, please contact the Recreation center at (305) 919-3678.