Florida legislation proposes 6 percent increase to tuition

MARIELLA ROQUE
Staff Writer

While members of the Florida legislature are considering a 6 percent tuition, members of the University’s administration are not considering an increase at all.

The House’s budget currently recommends a mandated 6 percent increase, but it is yet to be seen whether the Senate will agree to the increase or make a different decision.

According to Steve Sauls, the University’s vice president of Governmental Relations, University students will only experience the legislature’s tuition increase and not one from the University itself.

“We’ve taken a lead advocacy role on behalf of student financial aid,” Sauls said. “The President has spoken out repeatedly on behalf of financial aid.”

“I’m told the Senate is considering something,” said Sauls.

Both chambers have agreed to restore the $300 million cut from state universities last year.

“That’s very good news, that’s worth over $24 million to FIU,” Sauls said. “The state doesn’t seem to be cutting our budgets further and they’re restoring money that was cut before and maybe provide some additional money beyond that, and some of that might be a small tuition increase.”

Florida currently ranks 41 in the country in terms of tuition, although House Speaker Will Weatherford previously noted that it ranked 36.

“We were 48, but in recent years we are now 41,” Sauls said.

There are nine states that have tuition on the aggregate less than us, so comparatively we are still a low-cost tuition state.

Last year, the Florida Board of Governors approved a request from the University to increase tuition by 15 percent.

Despite the series of increases in tuition, some of our neediest students did not experience an increase because they got more FIU scholarships and they got more student financial aid dollars,” Sauls said.

The legislative session is set to end May 3 and the joint budget at that point will be sent to Governor Rick Scott for his signature.

Texting Service unfamiliar within University

MARIA BRITOS
Contributing Writer

When anyone has a concern or comment about transportation within the University, most students remain quiet or simply complain to their friends. What they don’t know, or haven’t heard of, is the Department of Parking and Transportation’s BusBuzz Text Connect service.

Promoted on the buses and shuttles, this service is a text messaging service that provides bus routes and schedules, safety rules and allows riders to text comments and concerns. These texts are immediately replied to the Department of Parking and Transportation with a list of options for the person to pick according to the purpose of the text.

Lissette Hernandez, director of Parking and Transportation, said that this service is a partnership with the University and a vendor which Parking and Transportation has hired.

This vendor is called Solstice Transportation Group, which specializes in providing large institutions with the proper tools to develop better transportation systems. The department uses the company’s services for bus passenger transportation consulting, evaluation and service performance analysis.

STG attends and participates in a variety of educational seminars and conferences provided by industry leading associations including the International Parking Institute, BusCon, the American Public Transit Association, the Parking Association of Georgia and the Carolinas Parking Association. Most of their clients include colleges and universities, city transit systems and larger institutions.

“This is how we hope to know how the bus service does on a daily basis and we can get firsthand information from the riders,” said Hernandez.

“We get a report weekly, aside for the immediate notification when an email or text is sent.”

Hernandez also said that this service is covered by student tuition, which then is given back to students.

“It is part of the parking and transportation overall operation,” said Hernandez.

“However, the problem is that the service isn’t being used as much as it should be and the little that it is used, the category with the highest feedback is the complaints.”

“I have honestly never heard of it, but I’m guessing it could be beneficial to the buses,” said Mitch Prieto, a sophomore public relations major, who commutes by bus from Modesto Maidique Campus to Biscayne Bay Campus on a daily basis.

The department expects this service to be promoted with more advertising around both campuses.

“The more this service is advertised and the riders are aware of it, the more effective it will be,” said Hernandez.

North Korea speaking of possible threat to US

JESSICA MESZAROS
Contributing Writer

While students and faculty went about their everyday tasks on Thursday, South Korea’s defense minister announced that North Korea has moved a missile in range to its east coast.

According to The Associated Press, North Korea has been railing against U.S.-South Korean military exercises, which began in March and are scheduled to continue until the end of April. The North calls these exercises “rehearsals for an invasion” and said it needs to defend itself with nuclear weapons.

Astrid Arraras, senior lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations, has been with the University for 13 years. She said that North Korea is doing this in a very public way on purpose.

“They want to intimidate, or create some fear in order for them to achieve whatever goals they want to achieve,” said Arraras.

Arraras said that she saw photographs that usually have comic captions within them. He finds them funny because he feels the North Korean leader doesn’t know what he is doing, but still believes him to be a serious threat to the nation.

Ghazal Soleimani is a doctoral candidate for the Department of Epidemiology. She said that sanctions in North Korea, or in general, aren’t always the best idea because they don’t always consider the people that suffer as a result.

“A lot of times they do these types of things as a plea for attention, and it’s the corrupt leaders in those countries that are to blame, and I think it’s really unfor- tunate,” said Soleimani.

“We’ll see what will be the response from the other countries, and we’ll see if he goes through,” said Arraras. “But it will be suicidal.”

-news@fiusm.com
Federal Aviation Administration delays closing of control towers

President Vladimir Putin said the civil war in Syria has become “a massacre” that must be stopped through peace talks between the government and the opposition, and repeated Russia’s firm rejection of calls for Syrian President Bashar Assad’s ouster.

Speaking to the German ARD television in remarks released by the Kremlin on Friday, he rejected the Western criticism of Russia for continuing to supply weapons to Assad’s regime.

Putin urges peace talks to end Syria ‘massacre’

The fugitive African warlord Joseph Kony is jettisoning women and children in a possible desperate bid to keep his weakened group lean and mobile, an expert said Friday, after three women freed by the Lord’s Resistance Army arrived home in Uganda after spending years in the bush.

Expert: Warlord Kony under pressure to free women

George Corvinto, a prominent Haitian historian best known for his exhaustive study of the Caribbean nation’s capital of Port-au-Prince, died Wednesday at age 88, a close friend said.

Fellow historian and longtime friend Georges Michel said that Corvinto died peacefully in his sleep at his home in the capital he wrote so much about.

Haiti historian who chronicled capital dies at 88

The closings of control towers at 149 small airports, due to begin this weekend because of government-wide spending cuts, are being delayed until mid-June, federal regulators announced Friday.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it needs more time to deal with legal challenges to the closures.

Also, about 50 airport authorities and other “stake-holders” have indicated they want to fund the operations of the towers themselves rather than see them shut down, and more time will be needed to work out those plans, the agency said in a statement.

The first 24 tower closures were scheduled to begin Sunday, with the rest coming over the next few weeks. Obama administration officials have said the closures are necessary to accomplish automatic spending cuts required by Congress.

Despite the delay, the FAA said it will stop funding all 149 of the airport towers, which are operated by private contractors, on June 15. Under the new schedule, the closures will be implemented at once, rather than a gradual phase-in as had been planned.

Airport operators in several states, including Florida, Illinois and Washington state, and the U.S. Contract Tower Association, which represents the companies that operate contract towers, have filed lawsuits with the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington seeking to halt the closures.

The suits contend that the closures violated a federal law meant to ensure major changes at airports do not erode safety, and unfairly targeted the program for an outsized share of the more than $600 million the agency is required to trim from its budget by the end of September.

“The administration has decided to make tower closures the poster child of sequestration (automatic spending cuts),” said the group’s director, J. Spencer Dickerson. “We believe there are other ways they could have skinned this cat.”

Federal officials have insisted that the closures wouldn’t affect safety. And there is evidence that with improving safety, some of the closures would make economic sense.

It turns out that the FAA has been using 30-year-old data on aircraft collisions to justify the cost of operating many of the control towers, even though accident rates have improved significantly over that time.

Had the FAA used more current data, it’s probable that some low-traffic airport towers operated by private contractors would no longer have met the agency’s criteria for finding, industry officials say. But the FAA has long been under pressure from members of Congress to open new towers at airports in their states, not to close them.

The FAA began paying contractors to staff and operate towers at a handful of small airports after President Ronald Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers in 1981.

Today, there are 251 towers operated by private contractors at airports across the country at an average annual cost of more than $500,000 each.

The closure plan is unrelated to the FAA’s use of obsolete safety data to justify the contract tower program.

In 1990, the FAA developed a complicated cost-benefit methodology for the tower program that relies on accident data from 1983 to 1986 to determine how many accidents would be averted and lives saved if an airport had controllers working onsite. The safety data have never been updated, despite marked improvements in accident rates.

In 1983, there were 10.7 accidents for every 100,000 departures involving small planes, business jets and non-civilian flights in the U.S., according to the National Transportation Safety Board. By 2011, the latest year for which figures are available, that rate had dropped to 6.5 accidents per 100,000 departures. The commercial airline accident rate has also dropped, and fatalities have declined even more.

There have been no passenger airline fatalities in the U.S. in more than four years, the longest period without fatalities since the dawn of the jet age half a century ago.

“None of the formulas have been updated since 1990, despite a very significant change in the aviation operating environment and the general aviation and commercial accident rates,” the FAA said in a statement in response to questions from The Associated Press. “The FAA is in the process of updating this policy.”

Agency officials offered no explanation for the oversight.

“The FAA methodology likely overestimates present-day collisions,” the Congressional Research Service said in a recent report.

Further reading can be found here:


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Get up to the minute news, instant sports updates, music and talk shows, event photo galleries, and more.

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Students gather, dress down to walk for a cause

LAUREN BANA
Staff Writer

This past Wednesday, I had the amazing opportunity to join the National Organization for Women at Modesto Maidique Campus at the first ever Miami SlutWalk.

There was an amazing turnout, and I couldn’t believe how many strong women and men came out to spread awareness of rape culture in our community.

As we waited for the walk to begin, people were preparing signs, sharing ideas and discussing opinions.

“SlutWalk is one of many calls to action to put an end to victim blaming,” said sophomore Anamaria Zambrano. “The victim is not at fault for rape. The rapist is.”

I felt so proud to be a woman. Walking with other women, who passionately spoke their minds.

So many people were utilizing their right to protest. And all to confidently speak out against the epidemic of rape culture.

I had a chance to interview Gabriela Bonilla, a member of NOW, to discuss the overall success of the SlutWalk, and ask how she felt this would impact the people of Miami as it opens its new chapter here.

She said that she was very pleased with how many people arrived to support victims of sexual abuse, and that she was “happy to see this movement reach people outside the FIU community, and had supporters from all different ages groups, especially happy to see so many men show up.”

I was also surprised to see so many men coming out to both, represent men who have been sexually abused, and to support their female friends. I think that this alone really shows the potential that Miami has to stand up for victims of sexual assault.

When I asked Bonilla what her stance was on how an event like this would affect Miami locals, she stated that it was an empowering experience to be a part of, and that she hopes for it to affect the people who witnessed it, and people who just heard about it.

I could tell that she was very passionate about this, and she really invoked a fiery spirit inside of me to continue to argue against people who will ignorantly combat against this issue.

Though the turnout was impressive, Bonilla did have a few concerns about the accomplishments of the event and whether or not it got enough attention.

“[It] could have reached a larger audience in our education initiative,” she said. “I still feel like there are a lot of students, and people of the community, who don’t understand the meaning behind the movement.” During the walk Bonilla also voiced her opinion about the word ‘slut’ and what she believes is the meaning behind it.

“(It’s) not conducive for an environment free of sexual violence. The language we use to describe women is just another way in which we facilitate violence against women,” she said.

“It’s time Miami becomes intolerant to all forms sexual violence,” she said, and I couldn’t agree more.

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Miami Dade Transportation: a love/hate relationship

VINSON PRESSLEY
Staff Writer

I sit on the bus stop bench at the Biscayne Bay Campus waiting patiently for the number 75 bus to arrive. The bus pulls up – after about 45 minutes – and everyone sprits to catch it, but suddenly the bus driver turns off the bus and casually strolls off the vehicle without a care in the world.

Although our transportation system has its advantages, it also has character flaws.

The Miami Dade Transit system gives a college student an affordable alternative to buying a car, especially for some of us on a tight budget. For just $50 a month, thanks to the service they provide; without them, our transportation system may not be perfect but I do recognize and appreciate the experience later on.

Thankfully Miami Dade’s transportation system usually offers several different options to get to one location.

Although Miami Dade’s Transportation system has its advantages, it also has character flaws.

A small percentage of MDT’s bus drivers display unpredictable, irritable and curt attitudes toward passengers at times. There have been several instances where I would ask a bus driver a simple question and was met with a very sharp response that was really unnecessary.

Maybe the bus driver had a bad day or experienced endless traffic, it doesn’t make it right to take it out on passengers, but to me its no big deal. I just pay my bus fare and take my seat and usually laugh about the experience later on.

Sure our transportation system may not be perfect but I do recognize and appreciate the service they provide; without them, the task of getting from point A to point B would be very difficult and expensive for me.

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Students become creative with senior projects

ALFREDO APARICIO
Staff Writer

“It’s an accumulation of our four years of working here. We are showing the FIU community what we have learned from the students and teachers in the program as well as bridging together people from different backgrounds, cultures and even states of times with these fiesta projects,” said Julio Livermore, who has been key to making his project work in which he will be alone on stage with only 100 shoes to keep his company.

“There are boundaries to what we can make up but there are ways around that. My piece has nothing to do with Andy Warhol but everything to do with him.”

Jordan Clara Ililani Sasaki’s senior project, entitled “My Name is Butterfly,” will be based on Julia Butterfly Hill’s three years living in a 1,500-year-old California Redwood tree from 1997 to 1998. The idea stems from her love of nature and natural environmental issues.

“It’s a topic I’m passionate about and my research allowed me to rediscover her story.”

Sasaki also had to adjust to being the writer, director and actor in her own show and performing the words she wrote to an audience.

“It’s been hard because you’re usually given someone else’s words and those are your lines but performing a script you write has added a much more personal level to this project than anything else I’ve been involved in.”

Jair Bula, whose senior project will focus on the character Drella, (When the Shoe Doesn’t Fit…) based on the life of Andy Warhol, has embraced the project as a chance to explore himself within another character that is closely related to who he is.

“We chose something that means something to our lives. It’s a rite of passage into becoming the artist because it’s hard to write a conflict with just one person and make it interesting.”

For Caceres, solo performance has been key to making his project work in which he will be alone on stage with only 100 shoes to keep his company.

“There are boundaries to what we can make up but there are ways around that. My piece has nothing to do with Andy Warhol but everything to do with him.”

ALFREDO APARICIO
Staff Writer

The University community honored Butler Waugh and celebrated his achievements by joining together in front of the PC building.

Butler Waugh, who died on November 7, 2012 at 78, is considered one of the four founding fathers of the University and moved on to become the College of Arts and Sciences founding dean.

Becoming a founding member, dean and teaching for 40 years was an advenature for Butler. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he went on to earn his bachelor’s degree from Washington and Jefferson College. He continued to earn his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1969.

The kick-start of his career was at the University of Kansas, but in 1961 he moved to Florida to become an English professor at the University of Florida. But his career wasn’t going to end there; it would keep growing at FIU.

Butler was nothing more than an abandoned airfield in the late 1960’s, Charles E. Perry, FIU’s founding father, called to creating a university from scratch was an experiment to him, an experiment that grew and succeed.

“He was smart, funny, he didn’t have too much of a sense his own self-importance,” said colleague James Sutton, who is now chairperson of the Department of English.

After stepping down, Butler had a better idea of what to do and what not to do with his career. “It clari- fied for him why he wanted to read literature and talk to students,” said James. He was able to think about the issues that were important to him.

“My guess is, during those years when he was starting the University... he didn’t have a lot of time to do that,” said James.

Indeed, now that Butler didn’t have to worry about hiring, working with faculty and students, and making sure the parking lots were running right as he did as a dean, he was left with a lot of time on his hands to think about the teaching itself.

“He loved his students,” said James. “He would sit on his office and talk for hours with his students, and he stayed in touch with them.”

According to James, Butler not only enjoyed the diversity of FIU, but also the fact that many of the students were hard working and first generation college attendees. It really mattered to him that he wasn’t teaching to privilege elite kind of students, but students who tried hard to get where they were.

“He was terrific teacher; really good to the willing and inquisitive,” said James.

The way that he touched so many students during the 25 years that he was teaching--that’s the kind of legacy that professors always want to have.

James Sutton
Chairperson
Department of English

University honors founding father Butler Waugh

EDWIVE SEME
Staff Writer

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A tribute to renowned film critic Roger Ebert

Finding the right words to pay tribute to someone who’s passed on is always difficult, even more so when that person is someone you’ve never known, but respected immensely. Sadly, that person is renowned film critic Roger Ebert.

I can honestly say Roger Ebert was a man I didn’t always agree with. We had more than enough one-sided yelling matches when it came to genre film ratings, but something always kept me coming back for more. That something was pure and unashamed honesty. Whether he loved or hated a film, Ebert never held back on what he thought and nearly always backed it up with solid reasoning. It’s a quality Ebert was. Whether he loved or hated a film, Ebert never held back on what he thought and nearly always backed it up with solid reasoning. It’s a quality that’s actually rare in the world of film criticism nowadays, where hatred and misinformed criticism world has almost been a rite of passage into the film criticism world.

Heck, every year around February I’d refresh his website constantly waiting to see if I could outguess his Oscar predictions just once - and wouldn’t you know it, I did. While that seems like something completely miniscule and pointless in hundreds upon hundreds of reviews, it’s still something that gave a budding writer like me confidence. It’s really those little bits of inspiration all around the world that really add up to how much of an influential presence Ebert was. There’s no doubt in my mind that thousands of others found their budding interest in film affected by Ebert’s writing.

A good friend of mine who also studied English and Film at the University, Francisco Pedro, told me something that really hit me after Ebert’s death. “Beyond the Valley of the Dolls” along with every word of film criticism.

Juan Barquin is a junior FIU English major. For the past year and a half, he has written more than 80 movie reviews for YAM-Magazine and is pursuing a certificate in Film Studies at the University.

Juan Barquin -juan.barquin@fiusm.com

Balance is key

Dear Nick,

Finding balance can be challenging with all of the demands on our time and attention. With a little perspective, mindfulness and planning you can help get life back to a manageable pace. First, I would clarify your values. Find out what is important and meaningful in your life, your writing.

So, here’s to you Roger Ebert. Regardless of our differences, your writing will always have a place in my heart, and I’ll always be thankful you gave us “Beyond the Valley of the Dolls” along with every word of film criticism.

Juan Barquin is a junior FIU English major. For the past year and a half, he has written more than 80 movie reviews for YAM-Magazine and is pursuing a certificate in Film Studies at the University.

Dear J.J.,

How can I deal with a rocky relationship while dealing with school and the everyday stresses of life?

J.J.

senior environmental engineering major

Dear J.J.,

Finding balance can be challenging with all of the demands on our time and attention. With a little perspective, mindfulness and planning you can help get life back to a manageable pace. First, I would clarify your values. Find out what is important and meaningful in your life, your writing.

This will help dictate your priorities and allow you to let go of things you may no longer need or want in your life. Relationships can be a wonderful source of gratification and fulfillment. Speak with your partner, let him or her know about the demands on your time and resources. Plan a date night each week when you can set aside the stresses from everyday life and school and focus on your relationship. Overall, we function better when we prioritize, take action to make sure we are doing what is important and meaningful in our life, and take care of ourselves. Try exercising or picking up yoga. With the end of the semester near you might even begin to practice meditation to help you keep a clear mind. Life can get a little overwhelming sometimes; just remember that with the right tools and a good positive outlook, you can overcome many obstacles! Good luck with your relationship and best wishes for the end of the semester!

Be Well.

Nick Scheidt, M.S. is a Doctoral Psychology Intern at FIU Counseling and Psychological Services. He is a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate from Carlos Albizu University. Once he completes his internship at FIU, Nick plans to work as a Psychologist, Writer, and Professor. Do you have questions you would like to Ask Nick? Send an email to: Nick@fiusm.com

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The search is on for new basketball coach

EDUARDO ALMAQUER
Sports Director

Making history was not enough to keep men's basketball Head Coach Richard Pitino motived with the Panthers and now the search is on for a new coach. On April 3, news broke that Pitino reached a verbal agreement to be the new coach at the University of Minnesota. The stunning departure comes less than a month after Pitino finished a season where he led the Panthers to an 18-14 season and the program's first Sun Belt Conference championship game. No one on the baseball team knew that Pitino planned on leaving. "We had one of the best seasons in FIU history and we were going in the right direction. I'm just shocked he would leave right now," senior guard Manny Nunez said. Malik Smith, the team's leading three-point shooter and second on the team in points per game, indicated via Twitter that he was going to ask his release immediately. "It might be time for me to part ways for FIU," Smith said via Twitter. Pitino leaves the program after year one of a five-year, $1.25 million deal that he signed in April 2012. His contract states that because he left before April 2015, he must now pay FIU one year's base salary worth $250,000. Retaining Pitino was something Pete Garcia, executive director of sports and entertainment, attempted, but in the end couldn't. In a press conference on April 4, Garcia said he sat down with Pitino at the end of the season and they had agreed to a modest pay raise, but once Garcia realized Minnesota offers, he knew it'd be tough to keep the 30-year-old coach. Pitino's deal with Minnesota is six years with a base salary of $1.2 million per year, totaling $7.2 million.

"FIU can't go there at this point in time," Garcia said. Garcia was unsure if Pitino would be taking his assistants with him. None of the assistants could be reached for comment. A national search for a new basketball coach is now underway. Garcia says he wants to hire someone within the coming week. "I want somebody that's going to do things right. I want somebody that's going to demand that the kids go to class and graduate," Garcia said. "I know we have a good list of candidates and there's a lot of people interested in this job." One omen hanging over the head of the incoming coach is the academic troubles of the squad. Garcia hinted that the FIU men's basketball may soon be slapped with a postseason ban for the 2013-14 season for sub par academic progress rate scores. The likely ban stems from the poor scores the team achieved during former Head Coach Isaiah Thomas' three-year tenure. The NCAA draws the cutoff mark for penalties at 900. The maximum score is 1000. In the 2009-10 season, the team had a single-year 900 mark. In 2010-11, Thomas' players registered a dismal single-year 833 score. The 2011-12 scores have not been released, but they're expected to be below 900. APR is a metric created by the NCAA to gauge how much progress institutions are making in graduating their student-athletes. The number is derived from two factors, worth one point each: eligibility and retention. In other words, players get their two points if they go away, the crowds are bigger and even more different, it stills feels the same for me because I'm one of the few days they have off and get to enjoy the trip. "It's honestly really nice on travel days," Kay said. "We get to relax on the drive over, prepare mentally for the game so the drive over there actually is an advantage to us." The Panthers 16-10 home record proves that the players feel more comfortable playing on home turf. This is where the Panthers have executed their best offensive performance. In a home stand against Middle Tennessee State University in March, they swept the Blue Raiders, outscoring them by 27 runs in the series, scoring just under 30 and allowing only seven runs. "I personally love it at home," Kay said. "They have to come and face us and our home crowd. That's what motivates us."

Softball team adjusts to adversity on the road

JOLSON DIAZ
Contributing Writer

Facing high caliber teams, dealing with long bus drives and taking on away crowds are just some of the extra obstacles FIU softball runs into when going on road games. The Panthers are 4-7 on the road and wrapped up a series against University of Louisiana at Lafayette at the end of March where they were swept for the second straight series. Although they had their struggles, the players focus on zapping out the crowds and not letting their away record interfere with their mindset and how they perform on the field.

"At the end of the day, it’s all the same game,” junior infielder Brie Kay said. “You just need to prepare yourself mentally to deal with the away game atmosphere.” There have been many highs and lows when the Panthers play on the road. A game against University of North Florida led to 12 panther hits and 16 total bases, the most this season in both categories. However, a game in Louisiana-Lafayette led to 11 Panther strikeouts, and they gave up 11 runs. The Panthers have given up to any team this season. To the players, home games and away games are nothing but a ball game. When it comes to preparation, they do exactly what they do to prepare for a home game. That usually involves reviewing opposing teams and players. The "I" in FIU is certainly represented in the softball team with players from all parts of the U.S., from Campus, Wash. where junior pitcher Mariah Dawson is from to Rose Hill, Kan. outfielder Marisa McGregor's hometown. So even playing home games at the softball field in FIU still doesn’t feel like home to most of the players. We go away, the crowds are bigger and even more different, it stills feels the same for me because I’m one of the few days they have off and get to enjoy the trip. "It's honestly really nice on travel days," Kay said. "We get to relax on the drive over, prepare mentally for the game so the drive over there actually is an advantage to us."

At the end of the day it’s all the same game. You just need to prepare yourself mentally to deal with the away game atmosphere.

"For me, it's just like any other game. I don't have many fans that come and travel to watch me play," Dawson said. "So every game we play, even at home, I'm playing to a different crowd. Of course, when not used to having fans." The Panther games never take place the same day as the bus drive over to their opponent's field, so the trip heading over proves to be more relaxing for the players. It's one of the few days they have off and get to enjoy the trip.

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The Panthers 16-10 home record proves that the players feel more comfortable playing on home turf. This is where the Panthers have executed their best offensive performance. In a home stand against Middle Tennessee State University in March, they swept the Blue Raiders, outscoring them by 27 runs in the series, scoring just under 30 and allowing only seven runs. "I personally love it at home," Kay said. "They have to come and face us and our home crowd. That’s what motivates us."

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Panthers’ own dual threat may create havoc for opponents

PATRICK CHALVIRE
Staff Writer

Athletes spend years, some their whole lives, perfecting their craft at a position. There are certain cases, however, where an athlete is expected and able to compete and perfect two positions in one sport. Richard Leonard is one of those cases.

Leonard, a junior cornerback from Miami Killian Sr. High School, is considered a dual threat to both the Panthers’ offense during practice, and opponents during games. Not only does Leonard spend his time harassing receivers and taking on any running back that may get past the line of scrimmage as a corner-back, he also showcases his ability returning punts and kicks as a returner on special teams.

“It’s a plus for our special teams,” Jason Brooks said, defensive secondary coach for the Panthers. “Having him back there as a return guy with his speed and athleticism, I think it’s fantastic.”

In 12 games last season, Leonard averaged 70.2 all-purpose yards a game. He racked up 758 out of his total 843 yards on kick returns. Leonard’s 29.2 average on kick returns placed him second in the Sun Belt Conference, just a yard short of Reggie Whatley of Middle Tennessee State University.

Though the Panthers are under new management with new Head Coach Ron Turner and staff, as well as heading into a new conference, Leonard does not let that stop him from reaching one of the many milestones set for himself. “I’m just trying to be the best in the league,” Leonard said. “Just working on ball security and things like that. Things that I struggled with last year.”

Leonard prides himself in not only his dual ability, but also his role as a coach and mentor for the rest of the defense. Leonard understands the success of the team will not come from just one person, and can be seen in practice correcting and helping his teammates on becoming better players.

Aside from learning a new system and gaining more experience during practice, Brooks has gone back to the roots to where many players, including Leonard, began their careers. Brooks strove to correct technique and concentration to the players and has the luxury of having an experienced player, such as Leonard, with improving the defense every day.

“The one thing we told these guys from day one is that fundamentals and technique will never change,” Brooks said. “Football is football. Schemes are schemes. The most important thing is the fundamentals and technique part of it.”

“He’s a very very talented individual,” Brooks said. “I think he helps our secondary tremendously. He sets an example to younger guys as far as becoming a good football player.”

Along with the talent Leonard displays on the football field, 170-pound corner also get it done off the field, especially in academics.

“Even outside of football he’s been great for guys,” Brooks said. “As far as going to class, doing the right thing. Studying, not only for school, but in football as well. He’s just been a leader for our defense.”

Being a dual threat has always come to Leonard. Prior to joining FIU, Leonard covered both sides of the football at Killian. Leonard was considered an all-around athlete as he not only played corner-back, but as well as quarterback, running back and receiver on offense.

Posting a 4.39 time in the forty-yard sprint, Leonard has always showcased his talent on kickoff and punt returns. Transitioning to college, many coaches try to limit the workload a player will take on the field. That doesn’t seem to bother Brooks one bit, as he fully trusts and respects Leonard to protect himself as he takes on a team on kickoff returns.

“I’m comfortable with it, as long as he keeps making smart decisions,” Brooks said. “When you have eight guys barreling down on you, we don’t want you returning. We want you to fair catch. Here in practice he’s made some great decisions back there.”

Standing at 5 feet 10 inches tall, Leonard does not come off as the biggest or tallest guy on the field. That does not stop him though, to Leonard, it only comes as an advantage to him and the team, and havoc for opposing teams trying to stop him.

“What makes me different is that I’m really quick,” Leonard said. “Since I’m short, I use my quickness and speed to make up for my size.”

New coach expected in about a week

BASKETBALL, PAGE 6

– determined by number of athletes on the team – and multiplied by one thousand to reach the final score.

Garcia said he’s been in contact with an APR specialist who alerted him that basketball was “heading down the wrong road” and was part of the reason FIU fired Thomas last season. In the press conference, Garcia acknowledged the possible ban and said that in the search for a new men’s basketball coach, he’s going to make all candidates very aware of the dilemma like he did with Pitino.

“Richard [Pitino] inherited that and Richard did a tremendous job of doing everything he could to fix that,” Garcia said. “He’s leaving us in a lot better shape than we ever managed.”

This is not the first time FIU has run into trouble with the NCAA. In 2008, FIU lost 11 sports scholarships for “misapplied enrollment and financial aid rules, transfer requirements and eligibility rules” during their shift from Division I-A to Division I-A. Whether the new coach will be here two years or 10, Garcia said he has a strong vision of the program’s future.

“We want to be successful at the next level,” he said. “We want to go to the NCAA [tournam- ent] and be successful there. We want to win in everything we do.”

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Patrick Rombalski, former vice president of student affairs at Boston College, spoke to students in the Wolfe University Center as part of an open forum. Rombalski prefers a diverse population in the student body as well as academics, both of which FIU has to offer. When asked how he would deal with the imbalance of attention between campuses, Rombalski said that each campus should forget about comparisons and focus more on how to be unique in its own way.

The Professor researches help for autistic children

JUNETE REYES

April is National Autism Awareness Month. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention approximates the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders to be 1 out of 88 in children.

Autism spectrum disorders can be diagnosed as early as 18-24 months after birth; unfortunately, services in the nation’s school systems are not provided until children are at least 3 years old.

Dr. Anibal Gutierrez, assistant professor of the Department of Psychology and certified behavior analyst, is working on a program known as the Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention Program that can change this by advocating early identification and intervention of the disorder.

As a behavioral analyst certified by the Behavioral Analyst Certification Board, Gutierrez is able to design and supervise behavior analytic interventions, such as the ones implemented in his work.

Gutierrez said that there is a program available before school system services, known as the Birth to Three System, but funding is typically low, and by extension, the depth of the services.

“We thought that we would set up this program to be a low-cost option; it is $500 a month, which is the hourly rate for intervention is incredibly inexpensive,” said Gutierrez.

Gutierrez said that autism spectrum disorders are characterized by symptoms of impaired social interaction, restricted interest and repetitive behaviors whose manifestations can vary, such as rocking and hand flapping. Meeting criteria for diagnosis can differentiate from person to person, which is why the early intervention program works on many aspects of the disorder.

“We work on all the domain areas that they need help with: communication, expressive language, receptive language, play skills, self-care, toilet training, picky eating if they have eating restrictions or if they don’t have a very wide array of foods that they’ll eat, and independence,” said Gutierrez.

Gutierrez said the program acts as a preparatory step for the child before entering a school program.

“Our classroom attempts to look like the next setting so we’ll have areas for independent work systems, areas for play, and areas for one-on-one teacher time,” said Gutierrez.

The program takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.