Sweetwater housing will not provide parking

CARLOS COBA
Assistant News Director

Future student residents of the private off-campus development being built north of Modesto A. Maidique campus, 109Tower, will have to cross Southwest Eighth Street to get to their vehicles. 109Tower will add 542 beds to the University and will be specifically managed for collegiate housing, but it will not provide its residents on-site parking. Residents will have to park in one of MMC’s garages, where parking is provided to all students via the parking fee portion of tuition.

The development is unaffiliated with the University; it is being privately built and will be privately managed.

“This housing project is a sign that private developers are interested in investing in off-campus housing,” said Robert Griffith, director of Facilities Planning.

Due to the fact that 109Tower is a private off-campus development, it does not have to be consistent with the University’s methods of developing student housing. According to Jim Wassenaar, director of Facilities Planning and Operations, the University generally applies one parking spot for every two beds that are added to housing inventory. There are only 20-25 parking spots available in this 15-story development, designated for logistical purposes.

“When I evaluated that project, I indicated my concern with the lack of parking being provided.”

Should Stand Your Ground be an elective course at FIU?

MARISOL MEDINA
Staff Writer

In Florida’s most recent high profile court case, the Stand Your Ground law became key in determining George Zimmerman’s acquittal of second-degree murder. Upon the verdict, Trayvon Martin became one victim of justifiable murder cases in Florida, which have tripled since the law was passed in 2005, according to the Washington Post.

The law’s unprecedented notoriety has led Florida Atlantic University to start a new elective course focusing on the Stand Your Ground law and its implications, as well as the school being the only university offering such a course according to the Sun Sentinel.

Phyllis Kotey, an FIU Law clinical associate professor that specializes in criminal law, believes the class would be best offered to general students, given that most non-legal students don’t understand the complications involved with the Stand Your Ground law and its implications throughout society.

“People don’t understand the complications involved with the law,” said Kotey.

Joelle Moreno, the associate dean for Research and Faculty Development and a law professor at FIU, said in an e-mail that she is interested in FAU’s Stand Your Ground course.

“It will be interesting to see how the course at FAU, taught by Broward County Assistant Public Defender Frank de la Torre, is constructed and received,” said Moreno.

Moreno, who was part of a panel led by State Sen. Chris Smith, tasked with reviewing the law, said, “I believe that thoughtful and well-informed discussion of this new law is important in the context of a robust understanding of criminal law trends.”

Kendra New, a first-year law student at FIU, also believes that general society, not only lawyers, should be more educated about Stand Your Ground and other self-defense laws.

“I think people need to know what it would take to have the law applicable to them. I don’t want it to become an overused defense, where it can justify any murder. If people understand what the true elements are, our society will be more educated about Stand Your Ground and other self-defense laws.”

University expands Communities in Schools program

MACKENZIE BARTELS
Contributing Writer

This fall, beginning the week of Sept. 23, 2013, FIU is launching a mentoring program that will pair students from Miami Northwestern High School with FIU faculty and staff.

There will be two programs: Fostering Panther Pride, which is intended for students who are or have been homeless or in the foster care system, and Golden Scholars Bridge Program, which intends to help provisionally admitted students transition into college life.

While these two programs are new engagements, this will be the University’s second year participating in the Communities In Schools (CIS) program.

This year, FIU is extending the program to the Biscayne Bay campus as well. CIS will provide transportation for the students to both campuses.

“We tend to see if there isn’t that guidance, or someone that’s really there for them, it might take them a lot longer to get through the process,” said Louisy.

At the University of Miami, Hudson said that having a resource for everything from her studies to simply navigating the campus changed her experience.

“You have a go-to person and you feel a sense of connectedness,” said Hudson.

CIS will provide as many students as there are available mentors. Between the two campuses, there are currently 39 mentors, but applications remain open with no deadline.

“Becoming a mentor requires that each applicant passes a Florida Department of Law Enforcement background check and complete Miami-Dade County Public Schools fingerprinting. Mentors will also attend a Sept. 20 workshop to launch the programs.”

The workshop will include a panel of mentors that participated last year and a group coming in to speak from Florida State University.

“Imagine that we, as a university, got a greater benefit from the program than maybe even CIS intended,” said Hudson.

According to Hudson, 85 to 90 percent of the students mentored last year are now attending college.

Hudson said that personally feels that mentoring is a great segue into the next level of education.

“I think one of the things as professionals we always focus on is continuous improvement,” said Louisy. “We are always looking for a way to enhance the services that we provide.”

MMC will launch the program on Tuesday, Sept. 24 and BBC will start on Wednesday, Sept. 25.

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STUDENTS COMMORERATE 9/11

Students' stand for freedom

MACKENZIE BARTELS
Contributing Writer

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-news@fiusm.com
PARKING NOT PROVIDED FOR FIU OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

Sweetwater, Page 1 said Wassenaar. “Our hope is that the private sector will provide good housing solutions for our students and safe access to campus.”

Safe access to campus and back will be an issue for future residents of 109Tower; they will have to constantly use the pedestrian walkway located at the intersection of Southwest Eighth Street and 109th Avenue, between Red Garage and PGS.

Administration emphasizes that the University and the City of Sweetwater are planning the construction of a pedestrian bridge in the area of said intersection.

“The Florida Department of Transportation is committed to creating a safe crossing for students,” said Griffith. “We feel the bridge will not only make it safe for students, but will also avoid congestion of traffic.”

The pedestrian bridge will be part of University City Alliance, a project involving the university, the City of Sweetwater, Miami-Dade County, Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, and the FDOT. Construction is set to begin in fall of 2014.

“The FDOT grant is coming through for the bridge project, which will move quickly,” said Griffith. “As quickly as the bridge project might progress, however, it would probably be in the earliest stages of its construction by the time that students move into 109Tower. The date of 109Tower’s completion is set for August 2014. Until then, student residents will have to rely on traffic lights, pedestrian walkways and drivers’ discretion. “I don’t understand why anyone would construct a nice housing complex without providing something as essential as parking,” said Valencia Augustin, senior public relations major on-campus resident.

Some students wouldn’t mind the commute. “I currently live two minutes away from the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, which is very convenient,” said Nicole Massucci, a graduate student from the College of Medicine. “I, personally, would choose to cross the street.”

When asked about the lack of on-site parking, EdR, 109Tower’s developer, pointed out that providing parking accommodations has financial disadvantages.

“It’s a matter of cost when you’re dealing with a development that is so close to campus,” said Scott Barton, vice president of EdR’s real estate acquisitions. “The parcels of land are limited and the cost of building structured parking is very high.”

Off-campus housing will increase as private developers step in to meet the high demand for student housing. This housing might not provide certain accommodations that are usually expected, such as parking.

“More private developers will build,” said Wassenaar. “Two to three large projects are being considered.”

Student residents weighed in on the issue of off-campus housing.

“Off-campus development is a good idea to meet the needs of the growing student population,” said Wassenaar. “They give students a choice that many other schools do not offer.”

...
Outgrowing our childhood

JENNA KEFAUVER
Staff Writer

For those of you who don’t know, the Green Library rents out iPads, Kindles and laptops for free; the iPads and Kindles for 24 hours and the laptops for three hours. Which is awesome, especially for me because I don’t have an iPad or a Kindle.

What’s not awesome is turning them on and accidentally seeing parts of someone’s private conversation because they forgot to sign out on Facebook, iMessage, Twitter or a dating/hookup site.

And now I know too much about a stranger I’ve never met, which is just awful because I might eventually have them in class or something. These people will never know because I’m not the type of person that finds it funny to hack someone’s Facebook status and write “This person forgot to sign out so now I’m going to post something stupid about what they like which everyone knows they don’t.” But it’s still awkward.

Last night, after checking out an iPad, I decided to watch Netflix. And even though I wasn’t expecting to find a beer pong game app on there, that was fun. So thanks for that.

But, seriously, just realize that there are over 40 thousand students that attend the University and any one of them can see what you’ve been doing on the library devices if you don’t sign out.

No one needs to know about the boy or the girl you like or the Twitter direct message conversation you’ve had, so sign out next time.

I signed in on the Netflix site with my account information, but it took me to whoever had used the application before me, and I was five minutes into an episode of Cake Boss before I realized I wasn’t on my account.

Also, don’t download gross apps.

And if you do, delete them.

No one needs to know that you downloaded some weird sexual positions app.

I never needed to know anything about your Kama Sutra positions and seeing as you left your Netflix signed in, I know who you are.

But it’s still awkward. No one needs to know about the boy or the girl you like or the Twitter direct message conversation you’ve had, so sign out next time.

JENNA.KEFAUVER@FIUSM.COM
Student researches cardiac stem cells from zebrafish during Harvard internship

EDWIE SEME
Staff Writer

"It felt surreal, it didn’t hit until I left the program to be," said Nicole Aguiar. Valdez Sanchez after her internship at Harvard. "I never saw this summer going this way... It was more than I could have wished for."

Chavelly Valdez Sanchez is a senior majoring in biology at FIU, and was one of the two FIU students accepted for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute program this summer.

"We were nominated and we both got accepted which FIU never had," added Valdez.

Through this program she was able to become one of the 44 undergraduate students around the country to conduct stem cell research.

"Chavelly’s very hardworking, and very curious," said Irina Agoulnik, associate professor in the Department of Cellular Biology and Pharmacology. "She was always dedicated; she would be patiently working until she either solves a technique before moving on, and she’s also a very positive person. I think she can inspire other people to do well and take advantage of opportunities."

Valdez usually is part of Agoulnik’s cancer research lab, but this summer she wanted something different.

"Stem cells in cardiac development and cancer research are very different fields of biology and I think the reason why she chose it is so she can experience this very different part of research," said Agoulnik.

Sanchez chose to study stem cells because she thought it would pose a greater challenge while also learning something new.

"I’ve never really learned anything about them [stem cells]; we’ve only touched upon it in my science classes," said Sanchez.

"And stem cells are amazing, so why not?"

Her research was specific stem cells in cardiac development, and Sanchez was able to study the development of zebrafish up close from birth in order to understand cardiac diseases in humans. It focused on the Outflow Tract, which is made of elastin and smooth muscle and is responsible for pumping blood to the body and lungs. Therefore, any defect to it will affect blood circulation. In humans, there is a condition called Supravalvular Aortic Stenosis which causes a mutation in the elastin gene, and thus decreases elastin levels and increases smooth muscles in the OFT, making it more narrow.

"I was in to see how it affects elastin and if it decreases or increases, they can see the blood being pumped out, so that’s really cool!"

In addition to being able to monitor blood circulation because of their transparency, zebrafish is also able to live without a heart for three days. "If you do induce any defects to the heart, you can actually track the progress of the fish and the case of the defect running, that’s why it’s very good to use the zebrafish for heart research," explained Sanchez.

The project targeted the nitric oxide-guanylyl cyclase pathway which reduces blood flow.

Sanchez tried to find out about this interaction by mimicking the condition in the zebrafish.

"I literally saw them grow from being one cell until they become this little fish. What’s fascinating about them is that they’re transparent," said Sanchez. "You can see the heart of the fish and you which is involved with smooth muscle and elastin regulation.

"If you inhibit certain molecules, we noticed that we can actually reduce elastin levels or manipulate smooth muscle proliferation," said Sanchez. Once the zebrafish were about three days old, Sanchez and her group would put chemicals in the plate. They were in to see how it affects elastin and if it decreases or increases, they could see the part of heart with elastin and see if there was any change.

"We treated them with certain chemicals and we noticed there was a decrease in elastin level so in that aspect we mimicked the condition, but we weren’t able to figure out why smooth muscle increased because we didn’t see any change," said Sanchez. "But the fact that we were able to manipulate elastin and smooth muscle was a step forward."

In order to determine what the implications could be of this interaction, they would put chemicals in the plate and see the heart of the fish and they would put chemicals in the plate.

"This interaction research could be the start of something more. It was more than I could have imagined," said Sanchez.

At the end of each night, the women in the process will be voting on their top three picks as will the sorority women. It is a mutual selection process.

Day One: “Sorority Day” is the day everyone is scheduled to attend all seven of the organization’s parties. It will be their first time attending a recruitment party which means it will be the first time they walk into a room with 100 plus girls singing and clapping. No one should be alarmed, this is normal. On Sorority Day, expect the conversation to be very light because the parties are the shortest. Conversations might also be held in small groups rather than one-on-one just because there are more people.

Day Two: “Philanthropy Day” This day is themed “philanthropy” which is the donation of money to a certain cause. On this night most of the women will be attending up to five parties (don’t worry if you don’t have five, that’s okay). Each organization has a philanthropy it supports and raises money for through its events.

Not everyone going through the process is involved in philanthropy work or knows much about it, but feel free to ask questions.

During recruitment, sorority women are not allowed to contact anyone.
Students teaching themselves biology

KIERON WILLIAMS Contributing Writer

Last month, FIU partnered with Miami-Dade Public Schools and invited more than 20 teachers from around Dade County to a workshop on biology modeling instruction.

Unlike the way most FIU students learned biology, this method is far more student-driven. Biology modeling involves treating students as practicing scientists that are developing and deploying a model based on the subject of the class.

For example, the teachers in the workshop developed models of plant cells through experiments with waterweed plants and potatoes.

This method of instruction lets the teacher take a step back and get the students more active in their own education by communicating ideas, solving problems and analyzing their experiments, preparing them for real work in a scientific community.

FIU’s STEM Transformation Institute is at the forefront of these innovative approaches to education. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, the majors that are becoming more and more necessary as the world evolves and newer problems unfold.

The STEM Transformation Institute was founded as FIU’s call to action, empowering potential engineers and scientists with the knowledge and practical experience that will prepare them to take on the world.

Although biology modeling is fairly new, modeling instruction in both chemistry and physics has been in use at FIU for the past 10 years.

“Traditionally your job as a professor is to convey the information, but students are not going to learn anything if they are not motivated to learn or put in the effort,” said David Brookes, associate professor of physics.

“I take on this role of designing the environment to help them see the point in what they’re doing. If I can get students to want to work hard, that’s 90 percent of my job done.”

Brookes is a part of a new breed of professors who have come to understand that lecturing to students has become outdated.

“When my class usually comes in on the first day of school, they’re afraid of physics,” he said.

“So I do this activity where I ask them to name something they did well or good at outside of academics. I split them up into groups, and ask them to come up with a learning cycle that would show everyone what it would take to become an expert in their hobby. While they’re designing this learning process, I go around the room and ask them things, like ‘what do you do if you fail?’ And they’ll say, ‘well, we read tutorials, we analyze our mistakes and we practice until we get it right.’ This shows me that students are already expert learners, they just don’t apply that expertise to their school subjects.”

Brookes’ goal, as well as the goal of similar professors, is to get students to access the knowledge they already have about their learning.

“Students can learn physics if I can reorient their attitudes and convince them to put in the work,” Brookes said.

“By teaching them how to learn.”

Sofia Schlossman, a STEM student majoring in biomedical engineering, sees the potential value of herself and her classmates.

Schlossman believes that an added difficulty of being a STEM student is that the University is “counting on [the students’ success].”

“We aren’t really a well-known school but we’re trying to get our name out there, putting a lot of money into STEM research and encouraging students to go to conferences and competitions.”

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Contributing Writer

How to invest in your health care for the future

KEN SWEET Associated Press

You already can invest your retirement money and your kid’s college savings on Wall Street. Next on the list: your health care.

A growing number of employees are required by companies to set up special savings accounts to cover part of their medical bills. Over time, they are also encouraged to invest a portion of it in stocks, bonds or a mutual fund, just like they do with a 401(k) or IRA.

Americans now have $18 billion in Health Savings Accounts, a type of plan that allows them to save pre-tax dollars for future medical expenses, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a non-partisan group that studies worker benefits. That’s more than double from a year ago. The amount of money in HSAs is expected to double by the end of 2015, according to consulting firm Deverit.

“They have nowhere to go but up,” says Paul Frostin, a researcher at EBRI.

An HSA is similar to the better-known Flexible Spending Account. Like in an FSA, an employee puts pre-tax dollars into a special account to use toward medical expenses not covered by insurance, from dental check-ups to prescription drug co-pays.

But the similarities end there. Unlike an FSA, HSAs do have a “use it or lose it” rule, so the money carries over year to year. A majority of companies who offer HSAs also contribute to the account, more than $1,000 per employee according to EBRI. HSAs are also portable. An employee can take their HSA to their next job or save the money for future use. The accounts can also earn interest from a year ago.

For workers, HSAs offer flexibility, although they are not appropriate for everyone.

For employers the accounts can provide savings. The plans have been shown to slow the rise in health care costs, or even lower them.

For Wall Street, HSAs are another way to make money. Why? The savings in HSAs can be invested once they hit a certain threshold, typically $2,000.

Nearly all HSA accounts are used in combination with a type of health insurance plan, or HDHP. These plans are also sometimes known as a “Consumer Driven Health Plan.” As their name implies, HDHPs have high deductibles, often $1,200 or greater for a single person, or $2,400 for a family.

HDHPs provide coverage for medical emergencies, leaving the day-to-day health care costs to the employee. HSAs can be used along with a HDHP to help offset those day-to-day costs.

When used correctly, HSAs can also provide a triple tax advantage, something even a 401(k) or IRA cannot do. The money put into an HSA is not subject to federal income tax and if the money is invested, any growth is tax-free as well. Any money used toward eligible medical expenses can be tax-free too.

If your employer hasn’t offered an HDHP plan yet, it’s only a matter of time. By next year, 80 percent of all large employers will offer a HDHP, according to 2013 employer survey by Towers Watson. The vast majority of those HDHP plans will include an HSA, according to the survey.

“Companies are becoming more interested in offering medical benefits that put a lot of the ownership on the employer,” says Elizabeth Ryan, head of Wells Fargo’s Health Benefit Services.
Football commitments for 2014 showing promise in senior campaigns

RHYS WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Saturday night Sept. 7 had the Wolverines of Belen Jesuit taking on the Christopher Columbus High School Explorers in a rivalry game at FIU Stadium.

The Explorers, who won the game by an impressive score of 37-0, are led on defense by a future Panther Senior linebacker Nick McBeath.

“When I have Nick McBeath on the field, I know that side of the defense is secured pretty well,” Columbus Head Coach Chris Merritt said. “We are going to put him to the wide side of the field where we think we are going to get attacked because he is one of the best. He is a Division-I player, I know that if we put our best at the point of attack that we had a better chance to win. The shutout tonight was a good indicator of that.”

Merritt also commented on McBeath’s readiness to transition to the collegiate level.

“I don’t think there is any better place in the state to get these athletes ready to play college football than Dade County,” said Merritt. “They are playing other athletes who are Division-I talent and I believe he will transition great to the next level.”

The Explorers, who will face American Heritage High School in Plantation Friday, will look to improve from a 1-1 start. The loss this season was to South Dade High School in Homestead.

The loss of 2014 commitments also include Luke Medlock, the younger brother of Jake Medlock, quarterback, and Sam Medlock, backup long-snapper Sam Medlock.

Luke is the starting quarterback for the Fletcher High School Seniors in Neptune Beach, Fla. Medlock, who scored twice for the Senators, had a one-yard touchdown run in the second quarter and a reception touchdown for 10 yards in an overtime game last Friday.

Overall, he had three completions on 14 pass attempts for 52 yards and an interception.

The Senators go into week three of the season with a record of 1-1 and will face the Sandalwood High School Saints of Jacksonville, Fla., who come in with a 2-0 record.

Along with Medlock and McBeath, a defensive tackle that will join the Panthers next summer is 6 foot 9 inches tall, 320 pound Joshua Desyour.

Desyur, who is a standout for the Hollywood Hills High School Spartans, also plays basketball and anchors a defensive line that goes into their week three matchup with the Everglades High School Gators in Miramar, Fla on Thurs., Sept. 12.

Outside of McBeath, there are four other recruits from the Miami area including Anthony Brown from Killian High School, who is listed as a defensive end.

Mark Bruno will join Brown and Desyur on the defensive side of the ball at cornerback from Planagan High School in Pembroke Pines.

As well as Tyree Johnson, who currently suits up for the Carol City High School Chiefs of Miami as a cornerback. The lone safety in the recruiting class is Andrew Soehl, who will graduate from American High School in Hialeah in the spring.

The incoming recruiting class holds no athletes from outside the state of Florida, but to date has 16 commitments.

Those 16 include: seven primarily defensive players, five players that play multiple positions, and four primarily offensive players.

Those numbers include a single offensive tackle in Chris Miller from First Academy in Orlando and a pair of quarterbacks in Medlock and Alex McGough from Gaither Union 66-7.

National Signing Day for these commits will be in early Feb. 2014.

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Panthers falter in the eye of the Storm

The FIU football team continues their first season in conference USA, the road ahead looks like a long one.

As the FIU football team continues their first season in conference USA, the road ahead looks like a long one.

The Panthers failed to get one first down throughout the quarter, and finished the game with 10, to the Knights 16.

The highlight of the game went to UCF’s first four-stor of a running back Storm Johnson. Johnson ran for 89 yards and three touchdowns on 18 carries.

“He’s one of the best backs we’ll play,” senior defensive tackle Greg Hickman said. “I think we did pretty well for the most part.”

Quarterback Blake Botts had his was with the Panther defense.

Going 12 for 19, 214 yards and a touchdown, with two big plays to receiver Rannell Hall for 60 yards, and then 34.

It looks as a week of training and watching tape of last week’s game didn’t seem to help the defense work on over commitment by their secondary.

All of them coming from corners Sam Miller and Randy Harvey, along with another for Justin Halley.

“We still make too many mistakes,” Head Coach Ron Turner said. “We made mistakes we can’t have. We played a very good football team; let’s give them credit. We had opportunities to make plays in the first quarter on offense, defense and special teams.”

Halley, a redshirt junior, continued where he left off last week.

Must be missing his former teammate Johnathan Cyprien.

The offense also hurt themselves with penalties. Four of them for 31 yards.

Not a lot on the box score, but costly when they turned third-and-short plays to third-and-long plays.

Plays that would later fall short of converting to a first down.

The Panthers will now look to try and fix those mental mistakes once again as they face the Bethune-Cookman Wildcats. The Wildcats will enter FIU Stadium underdressed, recently beating Virginia Union 66-7.

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The Beacon – 6

contact us...
New coach brings fresh perspective to Panthers

STEVEN ROWELL
Staff Writer

Despite not having much coaching experience to show for, new Assistant Coach Lindsay Bowen brings a different element to the coaching staff of the women’s basketball team. Bowen, a former standout at Michigan State University, is someone the players relate to. Bowen was once a student-athlete just as the women on the lady Panthers are currently.

“It is nice to be able to relate to the girls, and yeah it’s very tough, you have to be responsible and have time management,” Assistant Coach Lindsay Bowen said.

As the men’s basketball team has had problems with APR and many of their players have issues on the academic side, Bowen supports the idea of being a student-athlete with the student side coming first and likes what she sees from the FIU women’s basketball team when it comes to hitting the books and the classroom.

“There is tons of academic support and the girls have study halls and they are very focused in their books and that’s great, Bowen said. “It’s a lot of pressure on them but they do really well in the classroom and on the floor.” Bowen said.

While Bowen will have the chance to share her experiences as a student-athlete with the team, Bowen also has experience of playing basketball on the professional level. Bowen played a few years in the WNBA with the New York Liberty.

“The WNBA is great league; there are not many teams but it is very competitive and it’s the best players in the world that play there,” Bowen said.

Bowen looks forward to preparing senior Jerica Coley, who might be bound for the WNBA draft after her tenure at FIU. Bowen, like Coley, was also a point guard.

“She is a very athletic player and can make an impact in that league [WNBA] and she is obviously a great player and we believe in her, and for sure I can definitely help her,” Bowen said.

While Bowen was a former college and WNBA player, she also has experience of playing overseas which is also another alternative that many players do after college if they do not make it to a WNBA squad.

“It was life changing going there, it’s a different world, it kind of opened my eyes and made me appreciate what I have here,” Bowen said. “It was a great experience and I encourage any player who gets the opportunity to go overseas to play. A lot of times too, players will play in the WNBA and then go play overseas for like six to seven months to make it a year round thing. Getting a lot of experience and a lot of playing time.”

Bowen also has been in favor of the Panthers playing their up-tempo style that was seen last season and sees it being effective for them this upcoming season.

“We definitely want to run, push the ball and get easy buckets, that’s what we want to do, so definitely an up-tempo style but we also want to play with poise and with patience as well in the half court,” Bowen said.

With the up-tempo offense comes questions about how effective the defense can be.

“We have a lot of energy on the offensive end but we need to have that same intensity on the defensive end and taking it one step at a time,” Bowen said. “It’s tough but the girls are great and are very coachable.”

As Bowen enters her first season, she hopes that her experience as a former player can be a new dimension to the coaching staff and be of benefit to the team for this season and beyond.

-JENNIFER KAY
Associated Press

Diana Nyad is planning to meet with members of the marathon swimming community who are skeptical about her 110-mile swim from Cuba to Florida, her team said Monday.

Since Nyad finished her swim last week, long-distance swimmers have been debating on social media and in online forums whether the 64-year-old endurance athlete got into or held onto the boat accompanying her. They say she could not have picked up as much speed as she says she did from the fast-moving Gulf Stream current.

“Diana is proud of what she and her team accomplished last week, and she is committed to complete transparency,” said Andrea Crotin, one of Nyad’s spokeswomen.

Nyad planned to meet Tuesday with “her peers in the swimming community,” Crotin said.

Her navigator, as well as one of the swim’s two official observers, told The Associated Press over the weekend that Nyad swam in favorable currents the entire distance without aid.

According to Nyad’s team, she finished the swim Sept. 2 after roughly 53 hours in the water, becoming the first to do so without a shark cage. It was her fifth try over the course of more than 30 years.

Nyad’s progress was tracked online via GPS by her team — data that is now fueling speculation that Nyad stopped swimming or received assistance for hours at a time in the middle of the Florida Straits.

Many wonder about a roughly seven-hour stretch when Nyad apparently didn’t stop to eat or drink, recalling her 2012 attempt when she got onto the boat for hours during rough weather. Nyad eventually got back into the water to try finishing, but her team was criticized for delaying the release of that information to the public.

Some swimmers analyzing the available data say Nyad, who has said she tends to swim at a speed of roughly 1.5 mph, appeared to maintain swimmer’s pace or faster for a considerable amount of time.

Navigator John Bartlett said the increased speed was due to the Gulf Stream working in her favor, nothing more.

“At some points we were doing almost 4 miles an hour,” Bartlett said. “That’s just the way it works. If the current is in your favor at all, that explains it.”
Program introduces electric rental cars in Orlando

Visitors to Orlando often try new things while on vacation: thrilling roller coasters, luxury hotels, different cuisines.

Now, they can try out a fully electric car — and not have to pay for gas during their vacation.

Under a new program announced Thursday called Drive Electric Orlando, anyone who rents one of 15 Nissan Leaf cars from Enterprise Rent-A-Car will be able to charge the car for free.

There are about 300 charging stations in the greater Orlando area, with many located at hotels, near theme parks and even downtown outside of City Hall.

“This is a first of its kind. This is groundbreaking,” said Robbie Diamond, the president and CEO of the Washington, D.C.-based Electrification Coalition, a group that worked with Enterprise, several hotels, corporations and local officials to organize the program.

The group, whose aim is to get more people behind the wheel of electric cars, is made up of business executives, including some from Nissan — which means they have an interest in marketing the rental cars in hopes of courting future buyers.

“Our hope is that it’s a revolutionary project — once we get people in the car, we’re confident that the technology will sell itself,” Diamond said.

How it works: Once a driver rents the Leaf (at a cost of about $30 a day or less) at the Enterprise counter at the Orlando International Airport, they can stop at any of the kiosks in the area when the car has a low charge.

More than 25 hotels, including The Peabody Orlando and Renaissance Orlando, have charging stations, and valets will charge the cars overnight. Other large public places, such as the Orlando Convention Center, have charging stations in the parking lot.

There are no charging stations inside the area’s theme parks, but there are many nearby — and organizers say more charging stations are “in the works.” Renters are more likely to charge their vehicles at hotels overnight, they said.

If the car runs low on power while on the road, its dashboard screen displays the nearest charging stations. If the vehicle’s battery dies entirely, then AAA will come to charge the car for free, said Lisa Martini, a spokesperson for Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

The cars have a range of about 80 to 100 miles (about 130 to 160 kilometers) on a full charge. All of the details, including how to plug the car into a charging station, are fully explained to the renter at the Enterprise counter, said Martini.

“We want people to be comfortable with the technology,” she said.

Diamond, along with other officials, says that many people like the idea of fully electric vehicles like the Leaf or the Chevy Volt, but are worried about how far the car’s battery will go.

Electric car sales are only a tiny fraction of overall U.S. auto sales. Automakers sold just over 12,000 pure-electric vehicles in the U.S. through April, according to WardsAuto InfoBank, an industry database, and Tesla Motors, which designs electric vehicles.

That’s less than 1 percent of the 4.97 million cars and trucks sold during the same period. Even a $7,500 tax credit from the U.S. government that effectively lowers prices couldn’t persuade most car buyers.

The Nissan Leaf sells for $29,650 including shipping costs, although the company does offer $199 monthly leases with $1,999 down.

Renting a car and driving it while on vacation or on a business trip is a “try before you buy” scenario, said Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, who took reporters on a cruise around downtown Orlando on a recent day in a Leaf.

He pointed out the charging station in front of City Hall, at the Amway Center — where many concerts and sporting events are held — and at other county-owned locations, all within a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) radius of downtown.

At one location, he popped the car’s tiny hood and clicked a charging “pump” into the socket.

**The cars have a range of about 80 to 100 miles (about 130 to 160 kilometers) on a full charge.**