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Panel to have discussion on Cuba at the University

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Martin Palouš spent a portion of his life living in a totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia under Gustav Husák, which collapsed in 1989.

Palouš, the former Czech ambassador to the United States, ex-Permanent Representative to the United Nations for the Czech Republic and director of the Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights & Diplomacy at the University, admits that the transitional phase of his country in 1989 is similar to the situation that several Cubans may find themselves in following President Barack Obama’s declaration last December to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba.

In light of this declaration, the Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights & Diplomacy will be hosting a panel discussion on the future of the island and its ties with the United States and the European Union.

The event, titled, “Cuba and the World in 2015 Between the Past and the Future,” will examine the nation’s place in the international realm at the moment and its future.

The panel will host four distinguished scholars who will examine the debate surrounding the new diplomatic ties.

The panelists are Alexis Jardines, the Perez Bengochea Chair in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, a junior biology major. “Only the most realistic ideas.

In addition to the United States, the European Union has already started working on establishing ties with the Caribbean nation, according to Palouš.

The bilateral discussions between the EU and Cuba involve looking at the future of the nation in the light of the diplomatic ties that have been established. He said that at the heart of these discussions is the issue of human rights.

Supervised by the School of International and Public Affairs, the Václav Havel Center for Human Rights and Democracy addresses, among other things, the need of research and researching values of nations that have experienced oppression by helping these countries come to terms with democracy and human rights, according the Center’s informational packet.

Palouš said that, at present, what can be done with Cuba’s political situation is to make it more visible for the community to understand the issues. As he put it, the case of democratization is very interesting and what’s happening now is an opportunity for people to think about the island’s issues more seriously and to see its relevance in the realm of international relations.

While the event is open to the public, it will be good for students who are interested in both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, according to Palouš.

Students shared their thoughts.

“I don’t think much will come of the new diplomatic ties,” said Hanser Cruz, a junior biology major. “Only the governments, as it will, see the benefits.

Others expressed different sentiments.

“The whole issue with these ties between Cuba and the United States needs to be discussed, and this panel will give the community that opportunity,” said Yeneliz Hernandez, a sophomore psychology major.

Palouš considers it, while the Castro brothers want to achieve normalization of diplomatic ties on their own terms, it’s important to come up with alternative and realistic ideas.

He believes that Cubans want a peaceful transition and to be able to participate in economic changes in a fair and reasonable way.

For Palouš, the event will allow those in attendance to reflect and pose questions on the topic of Cuba in the world.

The event will take place on Wednesday, March 4 at 6 p.m. in the MARC Pavilion in the Modesto A. Maidique Campus.

“I think Cuban people want democracy,” Palouš said.

Reza Aslan engages students with Islam debate

Dr. Reza Aslan speaks to students at the Beyond Fundamentalism: Islam in the 21st Century lecture on Thursday, Jan. 15. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Initiative for Muslim World Studies and the Middle Eastern Program.

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The doors to the School of International and Public Affairs kept opening every few seconds to allow people in.

They were gathering inside SIPA’s Room 125 to see Dr. Reza Aslan, a New York Times Best Seller, who spoke to faculty and students about Islam in the 21st Century, last week, in an event sponsored by Ruth K. and Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series.

Recently his interview with media outlet CNN went viral on social media. In his interview, he slammed Bill Maher and CNN anchors Don Lemon and Alisyn Camerota for their overgeneralization and mischaracterization of Islam.

Within a minute of his opening, Aslan told attendees that he will avoid the typical lecture format and instead try to engage the audience by treating his lecture like a lively debate.

He spent the first few minutes explaining the concept of Christian nationalism.

It did not take him long before he rooted his conversation toward the topic that the majority of the audience expected him to speak on – the role of Islam in today’s world.

Aslan defined the concepts of Islamism and Jihadism and showed how these terms can help classify different Islamic states and groups around the world.

While talking about national

SEE ASLAN, PAGE 2

FIU’s Model UN team takes home big award

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Last weekend, the university’s Model United Nations team took home the Outstanding Large Delegation Award at the Harvard National Model United Nations Conference.

The conference, held from Feb. 12 to 15 in Boston, drew teams from over 300 universities and 68 countries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia and had over 3,000 students competing.

President Mark B. Rosenberg took to social media to announce the news.

“BREAKING NEWS: Last night, FIU took the Outstanding Large Delegation Award at the National Model United Nations Conference!!!” he wrote on a post via Facebook. “For the second year, FIU captured [this award] – this time with 7 more points….”

According to Rosenberg’s post, the team hopes to continue this success at the University of Chicago Model United Nations Conference in April.

The university’s delegation, comprised of 20 students, won 10 awards as a group-surpassing any awards they have received in the past years.

John Stack, executive director of the School of International and Public Affairs and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, is very proud of the team’s victory.

“We are absolutely delighted by our success in Boston,” Stack said in an FIU News article. “The Harvard National Model United Nations is one of the most prestigious conferences in the circuit. Our students’ hard work continues to pay off and we couldn’t be more proud of their success.”

The Model United Nations program is part of a political science course within the university.

International and Public Affairs and Student Government Association. The team is led by Director Ethan Roberts, a senior international political science major and one of the senior delegates on the team, is proud of the team’s performance at the conference.

“We couldn’t be more proud to be part of that legacy.”

Our students’ hard work continues to pay off and we couldn’t be more proud of their success.

John Stack
Executive Director
School of International and Public Affairs

It is supported by the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Relations major, and seven senior delegates.

Gabriela Guadalupe, a senior political science major and one of the senior delegates on the team, is proud of the team’s performance at the conference.

“Be part of that legacy,” she said. “Each year, the competition becomes more fierce, but it’s a challenge we have consistently overcome. Winning this award goes to show that our delegates remain some of the best in the country. I couldn’t be more proud to be part of that legacy.”
NATION & WORLD BRIEFS

With Islamic State threatening, Turkey abandons historic tomb in Syria

After months of siege by Islamic State extremists, Turkey early Sunday sent an armored column into Syria to evacuate troops that had been guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah, the grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire.

The government announced that nearly 600 soldiers were deployed to the site on the Euphrates river late Saturday, traveling in more than 100 tanks and armored personnel carriers, and aided by airborne early warning and control aircraft, military helicopters and drones.

The troops removed Suleyman Shah’s sarcophagus, and then destroyed the mausoleum. Turkey said it would honor Suleyman Shah’s remains in the Ashma region, close to the Turkish border, after a new mausoleum is built.

The operation ended what in effect was a long-running hostage crisis, which began when Islamic State forces captured the area surrounding the enclave about a year ago.

In Ukraine, tragic but fake death of heroic nurse who was actually a porn star

The story making the rounds on the Russian version of Facebook (Vkontakte) would be truly horrific, if not for the “truly” bit. A heroic young ethnic Russian nurse, working the front lines of the war between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatists, was captured by the Ukrainians. After dragging her back to their camp and abusing her (in such a vile manner that the description is no more specific, though it is noted that “they recorded their fun on video”), one of the Ukrainian soldiers grabbed an ax and decapitated her.

The name of the heroic nurse is given on the “Aid for Donbas” page as Sasha Serova, and while they don’t give her age, they do run a photo showing a beautiful dark-haired woman, with surprising, come-hither eyes.

Kerry meets with Iranian foreign minister in another push for nuclear deal

Concerns over what ability to enrich uranium Iran would keep and whether it would maintain its controversial plutonium reactor at Arak remained points of disagreement Sunday as U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, began another round of top-level talks. Both issues are critical to limiting Iran’s ability to the quick development of a nuclear weapons, and must be resolved if Iran and the world powers’ efforts are to reach a long-term agreement on Iran’s nuclear program that would allow the lifting of economic sanctions.

U.S. and Iranian officials have been engaged in bilateral talks since Friday, and on Sunday the European Union hosted a negotiating session Sunday after the Kerry-Zarif meeting.

Debate on Islam intrigued students

ASLAN, PAGE 1

and transnational agendas, Aslan pointed out the common misconceptions about Islam and its role in creating groups like ISIS and how ISIS has an absence of practical and achievable goals in their transnational agenda.

He said that groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda unite people under an umbrella of common grievances against a common enemy.

Aslan says that ISIS are inclined towards transnational Jihadism and that an effective way to combat such groups is to allow and promote Islamism, which is more nationally and rationally rooted.

“Anyone can be a Muslim just by saying that he is and nothing else,” Aslan said, as he explained how the personality of an individual and what one brings into a religion dictates the direction one goes on.

On another note, Aslan joked that the sole purpose of media is to sell Coca-Cola and Viagra.

In the lecture he mentions there is a small difference between editorial culture and TV serial production rooms, as both are constantly trying to find out what sells with the public.

Aslan believes that pop culture is a more effective tool that can propagate rightful messages about culture than media.

Not all, including Muslims, received Aslan’s comments on Islam warmly. Aslan is sometimes met with strong criticism.

One particular question from the audience stood as a testimony to this.

The student expressed his dissatisfaction with Aslan’s comments on religious leaders and their use of theological manuscripts and ideas.

Aslan responded, with a hint of passive aggressiveness and said that it’s the behavior and not beliefs that are important – a statement that was received with instantaneous applause.

Aslan also made himself available and open to talking with students. His response to a student who brought up the issue of a transgendered mosque was to come and chat with him after his talk.

Throughout the lecture, Aslan spoke as if his every thought landed on a conveyor belt and went through a series of inspection points before being presented in an eloquent manner.

Overall, Aslan’s visit to FIU intellectually highlighted the common issues with Islam perception today.
Fresh Food Company: Not so fresh at all

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There are many benefits of living on campus. As a student of FIU, we build a network of friends, participating in school related activities, getting to class on time and especially having a meal plan so you don’t have to cook every day and some of the best things offered to us. But what happens when you start going to the cafeteria and there’s nothing to eat?

Fresh Food Company is the main cafeteria here at the University and on many days, I overhear complaints from students. Sometimes going to the cafeteria is pointless as there is nothing to suffice the hunger of a student after a long day. If the cafeteria is closing at 11 p.m., staff usually will lock it up at 9 p.m. They start packing away food trays, cleaning up tables and closing down stations. This minimizes the options left for students to eat.

Since there is no food at the stations, hungry, irritated people gravitate towards the salad bar hoping for creating a hearty salad. However, nothing.

The lettuce trays consist of scraps of lettuce, no spinach is left and there is barely any salad dressing!

On other days, there is food; however, there is no variety. The stir fry station usually has commendable fried rice, but sometimes the options are only pork and tofu. What about the people who don’t eat pork or don’t like tofu? A university cafeteria is supposed to cater to all of the possible likes of the school.

Also, the vegetarian options are limited. There are only two vegetarian dishes served. Although there is a salad bar, vegetarians include a lot more interesting dishes in their diet than just salad.

Sometimes going to the cafeteria is pointless as there is nothing to suffice the hunger of a student after a long day.

Better days arrive eventually, when Fresh actually has food to feed students throughout the entire day. These days only occur when the supervisors are in the cafeteria keeping an eye on the cafeteria staff. It is unbelievable how spectacular their services are when they are being watched and make sure they are catering to our needs, as they should.

Tough choice: Graduate school or nah?

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When I start thinking about graduation at the end of this semester, I am happy as my family is for me. In fact, graduating is scary because it gets closer and closer whether you’re ready for it or not, like the big drop in a roller coaster. Reaching the end of undergrad is like climbing slowly up that first hill and watching the ground get farther and farther away. You look back up, and you see nothing ahead of you. You have no idea what’s going to happen next. All you know is that things are going to change, and that you might throw up.

As I reach that big drop, I am faced with one of the greatest decisions of my life will I go on to grad school, or will I not? I’m not pre-law or pre-med. I have a major that can (hopefully) do me fine upon graduation.

I’m not pre-law or pre-med, I have a major that can (hopefully) do me fine upon graduation.

But as much as she wants me to believe it, I know that I am not hopeless if I choose to stick with my Bachelor’s Grad school is expensive in some cases more expensive than undergrad. If I decide against it, I can save my money and focus every hour of each day on building my career. One special training. And how can you really know what you want to specialize in before you know what it looks like and feels like in the workplace?

Going to grad school is something to be commended, but it is important for students to know that you are not hopeless if you decide against it. Your parents and your advisors will tell you otherwise, but there are people who have become successful without a college degree at all. If you decide to go to grad school, just make sure it’s because you want to, not because people are pushing you to go. The drop is steep with just a Bachelor’s, there’s no doubt. But success will find you if you work for it, no matter what degree you have.

Graduate school is very costly and even if you have a job, you would have to work full time in order to afford it. When you start going to the cafeteria, many of the staff tend to lounge or else the number of meal plans bought goes down and the budget could not be found online but according to the Financial Board of Governors, 68 percent of FIU students with a Bachelor’s degree are employed one year after graduation, so the odds are in their favor. The last thing I want is to dig myself deeper into debt because of something that may end up being unnecessary.

As I reach that big drop, I am faced with one of the greatest decisions of my life will I go on to grad school or will I not? I’m not pre-law or pre-med. I have a major that can (hopefully) do me fine upon graduation.
Homefield Comedy Club’s ‘Comedy On Tap’ brings Miami improv to Kendall

CRYSTAL FERNANDEZ
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It felt like home to some who celebrated the NBA championship games, and it contained the screams of football fans during the World Cup. Homefield Sports Bar has been a hot spot for sports but now it’s giving locals the opportunity to sit back and enjoy an evening of jokes, laughter and drinks.

When The Miami Improv in Coconut Grove closed its doors in Miami Improv with a one night only special event of his ‘Hot Mess Comedy’ Tour. “We don’t have any comedy clubs in Kendall, so when we headlined names such as Rob Schneider, Michael Yo and Carlos Mencia the feedback was phenomenal,” said Gibson. When football and basketball season came around, the improv shows came to a halt so that the venue can cater to the sports fans. But it wasn’t long until comedy made its way back to Homefield.

Claudia Angulo, Homefield Comedy Club Coordinator said, “We dared a little because of the sporting events but us here at homefield really liked the idea of a comedy club and we felt Miami needed one.”

The venue has undergone a few changes for its new theme. To keep the familiarity for the locals, the same logos remains but the words “live to laugh” have been added. Soundproof curtains, acoustical tiles, glass dividers and adjustments to the sound system have been added to fit the new theme.

“We’re really going for a long term comedy club and we want it to be the real deal,” said Gibson

A regular show starts with a local comedian or host, followed by a feature comedian and finally the headliner. The two-hour national comedian shows run on Friday and Saturday. Some headliners this month include Alex Reymundo, Michael Yo and Carlos LaBove.

Once a month, the comedy club hosts a ‘New Faces in Comedy’ show. This is an open mic event that anyone can attend and participate. Who knows? The next Rob Schneider could be walking the halls of FIU.

“We had this one guy show up last month and he was like, ‘Hey, I have ten people with me can I get on stage for a few minutes?’ and we were like yeah sure go ahead,” said Gibson.

Gibson said he would love to see more students at the shows. Whether it’s been a tough week at work or you’ve just finished a marathon study session, a good laugh can always make things better. “Comedy crosses all demographic lines and income levels. When you have a long day really all people want to do is laugh and that’s what we want to provide for them,” said Gibson.

November of 2013, Miami was left in a comedy drought. With a team effort and a little help from big names in comedy, Homefield Sports Bar became Homefield Comedy Club, Miami’s new laughter machine and “Comedy On Tap” was born.

Homefield has already built a reputation for its laid-back bar feel and a good game of pool. It’s 8,000 sq. feet that fits approximately 450 people and is popular for sports games and events. Homefield Comedy Club Manager, Bill Gibson, feels the sports bar reaches its full potential when big events crowd the venue. “We found that the venue was most packed when we had a big event. Its a big spot, we get great use of it. The atmosphere is amazing and its great for business,” said Gibson.

Which is why when the owners of the Coconut Grove Comedy Club and Homefield Sports Bar worked together to bring Miami Improv back the feedback was just as expected.

On March 22, 2013 Michael Yo kicked-off opening night of The "Comedy crosses all demographic lines and income levels. When you have a long day really all people want to do is laugh and that’s what we want to provide for them,” said Gibson.

Like professor Santaella, I know that as our country progresses, we can create a unified culture that values differences and acceptance and less discrimination comes to raising my children.

As a human being and as a person that looks forward to having a family of my own one day, I hope that my sexual orientation will become an obsolete topic to society when it comes to raising my children.

I look forward to seeing more acceptance and less discrimination of the LGBTQ community and same-sex parenting.

I hope that as our country progresses, we can create a unified culture that values differences and accepts similarities.

After all, being LGBTQ is a process of self-discovery, questioning and acceptance. Being questioned about our parenting capabilities by society shouldn’t be part of it.

Every Wednesday Pride Guide will take a deeper look into the LGBTQ community at FIU and produce a column that will consists of keen analysis within the daily lives of LGBTQ students and faculty. Make sure to read more and fiusm.com.
FIU League of Legends community preparing for Panther’s Rift

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Over the past few years, E-Sports have steadily gained popularity around the globe due to competitive multiplayer games such as League of Legends and Dota 2. Last year alone, the League of Legends 2014 World Tournament was streamed by 40 private broadcasters in 19 different languages and had over 27 million viewers.

With its popularity among FIU gamers, it is no surprise that FIU will be hosting its largest League Tournament ever named Panther’s Rift.

The tournament is a joint effort between STARS and Association for Computing Machinery, both of which are under the School of Computing and Information Sciences, to promote programming education among FIU students.

The tournament itself began preparations early spring semester among a group of students from both organizations lead by STARS President Gio Peralto-Pritchard, whose vision of the event is to bring together a community with a common interest.

“Students have actually sent me emails and messages saying thanks for hosting this tournament, this is a great idea. The positive feedback has proven to me already that this is a good idea.” said Peralto-Pritchard.

“Originally, I aimed for a 40 person tournament because that is what Riot Games requires for sponsorship for an event, but the day after we opened registration we had 40 people and we felt we could make the cap larger.”

The tournament consists of 16 teams of five that will battle through a first phase elimination qualifier March 7 and the main event on March 21.

Semifinals will be best out of three and finals will be best out of five.

All standard League of Legends rules apply to the tournament. There will be plenty of space for spectators and the team is planning to stream the tournament on the popular streaming site Twitch for outside League fans to see.

The tournament as of now is going through its final preparations. STARS and ACM members have assembled a Solutions Engineering team specific to solving the technical and logistic issues of holding an event of this magnitude such as creating algorithms to evenly distribute individuals to teams, handling online participant registration and create live video streaming solutions for the event.

“It may not sound like a big deal, but when you get to the fine math of it we have to incorporate a lot of mathematical/computational theory and efficiency,” said Peralto-Pritchard about the work his solutions engineering team has been doing.

“One big difference between Panther’s Rift and ordinary League Tournaments is that it requires for sponsorship for an event, but the day after we opened registration we had 40 people and we felt we could make the cap larger.”

STARS President Gio Peralto-Pritchard, whose vision of the event is to bring together a community with a common interest.

In the end, Panther’s Rift could bring more than spawning a new community of gamers and free goodies like Tormo Hats. Establishing a relationship between Riot Games and FIU could create a pathway for internships and opportunities for students within the company, as well as establishing a greater E-Sports culture on our campus.

Movies to be screened at first WideScreen Film & Music Video Festival

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The festival begins Friday, Feb. 27 with a pre-party at Club 50, open to all festival attendees. All films, including shorts, web-series, trailers, documentaries, full length films and more will be shown at AMC Aventura 24. The event will close with an award show on March 3, to include a cash prize for the best film.

“We’re featuring music videos as well, so we’re giving musicians and artists overall a chance to showcase their works besides film,” Slosaski said.

“We’re featuring music videos as well, so we’re giving musicians and artists overall a chance to showcase their works besides film,” Slosaski said.

“Aaron Abelto, 30, also an FIU alumnus, commends Knowles for creating a gateway for local filmmakers, both professional and amateur. One of the many urged by Knowles through social media to showcase his work, Abelto submitted a trailer for his feature film “I Before Thee,” and is nominated for the awards for best trailer and best screenplay.

“That’s how you get notoriety,” Abelto said regarding film festivals. “My main objective is to just get the story out there and to show that South Florida has talent.”

In addition to showing films, the festival will also host workshops for those interested in breaking into the industry.

“For the workshop, we have several renowned filmmakers like Jessy Johnson, one of the directors of the Wonder Woman fan film. It’s a networking opportunity for persons (sic) to meet industry professionals,” Knowles said.

The team also reached out to film departments in schools to promote the event and give upcoming filmmakers an opportunity to show their work.

“We’ve reached Nova, Broward College and the Art Institute in Ft Lauderdale,” said Slosaski. “I was surprised that a lot of people said they’ve heard about this through Facebook.”

Knowles hopes to make the festival a yearly event and inspire artists to partake in the movement to support up-and-coming filmmakers.

“You can dream bigger – be the one that creates the opportunity instead of being the one chasing it,” said Knowles.
Offense shines at Madeira Beach Invitational

The FIU softball team (11-9) completed a pair of wins over Manhattan College on Friday, Feb. 27.

The first game went into extra innings against the Jaspers, with the Panthers cutting their deficit to one run in the bottom of the 10th. Unfortunately, the team fell 4-3, with an inning-ending double play a key factor in the loss.

The second game was a dominant performance from the Panthers on the mound, as they shut out Manhattan 3-0. FIU’s pitching staff allowed just two earned runs, with a complete game effort from starting pitcher Rachel Dwyer.

Junior outfielder Edwin Rios takes a big swing against the University of Tennessee. The Panthers have a record of 4-4 after the Baseball at the Beach tournament at Caravell Resort.

Junior Corinne Jenkins delivers a pitch during the FIU softball team. The final day of the tournament was Feb. 27 through March 1.

The FIU softball team travels back home now where they will host the Panther Invitational Feb. 27 through March 1.

On Sunday, two freshmen took the mound for the Panthers as FIU squared off with N.C. Central for the first time in school history. Right-handed hurler Andres Nunez started the first game versus N.C. Central and another right-hander, Garrett Cave, took the mound for the second game.

In the opener of the doubleheader, Nunez had an amazing performance pitching six and two-thirds shutout innings and allowing just two earned runs.

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The FIU Panthers won the game in a loss to Texas State 6-5.

The second game of Sunday’s two-game series versus N.C. Central had a dramatic twist to it. FIU was down to its final out in the bottom of the 10th inning 5-4. Unlikely hero freshman Mitchell Robinson single game-winning hit to put the Panthers up 6-5.

Junior outfielder Edwin Rios takes a big swing against the University of Tennessee. The Panthers have a record of 4-4 after the Baseball at the Beach tournament at Caravell Resort.

Junior Corinne Jenkins delivers a pitch during the FIU softball team. The final day of the tournament was Feb. 27 through March 1.

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Successful offseasongives new hope for 2015

As the FIU football team prepares to begin spring practices next month, it’s a good time to look back on the extremely active offseasong the Panthers had.

The biggest difference between the 2014 and 2015 teams will be the coachingstaff. Starting very early in the offseasone, various coaches departed from FIU for other vacancies around the country. Many view this as coaches using a smaller program like FIU as a springboard to a bigger job, as formerdefensive coordinator Josh Conklin and formerlinebackers coach Rob Harley both accepted offers from the University of Pittsburgh, and former running backs coach Kerry Dixon II went to UF.

This is something that has been occurring in college football for years, and it will continue to occur. Coaches spend their time at smaller, lessestablished programs to build up a resume and improve their abilities, and leave when they get theattention of larger schools.

While it is not necessarily fair for schools like FIU and especially schools in the lower divisions, it’s important for the development of college football. There are always jobs that need to be filled, and there’s nothing wrong with someone wanting to get the big bucks and have more national exposure. It’s an unfortunate reality that FIU currently has to deal with, but as the football program continues to grow and improve, they may start becoming one of those schools that more coaches will aspire to work for.

Overall, despite losing out on some of the key coaches from years past, the changes to the coaching staff will improve the team going forward. Obviously it’s too early to tell exactly how effective the new coaches will be, but the guyshead coach Ron Turner brought in are extremely qualified to continue moving the Panthers in the right direction.

The most important hire was that of Tim Harris Jr. from Booker T. Washington High School as the new running backs coach. The void left by coach Dixon will be very hard to fill, especially when it comes to recruiting. Dixon was very active in acquiring players from Miami-Dade County, but a guy like Harris is exactly who you would like to see in that position.

Booker T. Washington is one of the best high school football teams in the nation, and is right in the heart of Miami-Dade. Harris definitely has ties and connections throughout the county that will help FIU sign players not only from Booker T Washington, but also at other schools in the county. Dixon did a tremendous job in his one season here getting those Miami kids, but Harris has even more potential in that area.

His on-the-field production is obvious as well, as he was the head coach for a 14-0, state champion, nationally ranked high school team at Booker T. Washington. He was also theoffensive coordinator there for five seasons, so there’s no question that he’ll be able to come in and help the FIU running back core improve.

Other highlights from this new-look staff are defensive coordinator Matt House, who held the same position that Josh Conklin now holds at Pitt, as well as new cornerbacks coach Greg Moss.

The other major part of this offseasone was National Signing Day, in which FIU added a plethora of new and exciting talent.

There will be 23 new Panthers on the roster in 2015, all of which will be given a chance to contribute right away. Positions of need were filled, namely the wide receiver position when FIU got a signed letter of intent from Miami Central High School’s Anthony Jones. Jones is considered one of the most explosive offensive talents in the state, and coach Turner said he expects Jones to play right away.

The 2015 class also looks to solidify the offensive line, which will have a completely new look next season. New talent was also added at quarterback with the additions of Christian Alexander and Tim Harris Jr.’s high school star in Maurice Alexander.

In total, FIU added two quarterbacks, two running backs, four wide receivers, one tight end, three offensive linemen, four defensive linemen, one linebacker, five defensive backs, and one kicker/punter this offseasone. 22 of these 23 players came from the state of Florida, so a lot of local talent was brought into the team.

2015 looks like it can be a very exciting season for the Panthers, and after an offseasone like the one they’ve had, the team can exceed expectations.
Swimming and diving brings first Conference USA championship to FIU

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The FIU swimming and diving team clinched the Conference USA title in Knoxville, Tennessee on Saturday, Feb. 21. The Panthers blew out their C-USA rivals by over 100 points to secure the school’s first title.

During the event, FIU won eight races. The Panthers also broke a total of 11 school records while competing in Knoxville.

Senior Johanna Gustafsdottir was the biggest contributor to FIU’s C-USA title, winning three events over the four-day competition. Another valuable athlete was breakout freshman Silvia Scalia, who added two more wins to an already outstanding season.

Gustafsdottir managed to break a school record for each of her wins. Because of her performance during the regular season and in the C-USA championship, Gustafsdottir was named the 2014-2015 C-USA Swimmer of the Year. Head coach Randy Horner was presented with the conference’s Coach of the Year award at the event.

“I’m proud of our team,” Horner said. “They competed like champions all week and earned this title. I’m so happy to bring FIU our first C-USA Championship.”

After the first day of competition, the Panthers were ten points behind Rice University and Western Kentucky University. During the day, Scalia, senior Klara Andersen, freshman Letizia Bertelli and sophomore Jennifer Deist teamed up to finish third in the 200 medley relay. With a time of 1:59.28, the quartet broke the previous 1:41.78 school record set at the Mizzou Invite last November.

Highlighting the second day of the event were Gustafsdottir and Bertelli. Gustafsdottir claimed a conference title in the 200 IM with a time of 1:57.33 and Bertelli posted a time of 22.94 seconds in the 50 freestyle to take a conference title of her own. Both times were new school records. At the end of the day, the Panthers led 256-235 on second-place WKU.

The Panthers entered the third day of competition with a commanding lead. Scalia earned the conference title in the 100 breaststroke with a time of 52.97 seconds, and she set the new school record. Gustafsdottir set a new C-USA record in the 400 IM, with a time of 4:11.83 in the final swim of the preliminaries to claim her second conference title of the event.

Sophomore Lily Kaufmann dove with a final score of 253.10, which was enough to earn her a second-place finish in one-meter diving.

Entering the final day of the competition with a 73-point lead, FIU had its best day at the competition, taking home the 200 breaststroke, 200 backstroke, platform diving and winning the conference with the 400 freestyle relay.

The swimming and diving team is expected to compete next at the NCAA Championships March 19-21 in Greensboro, North Carolina.

**Swimming and diving**

**The emotional experience of The Tunnel of Oppression**

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To raise awareness on societal issues, students will embark on a journey through a “Tunnel of Oppression,” an interactive exhibit hosted by the BBC Student Programming Council.

The exhibit is part of the SPC’s Arts of the Week where students are encouraged to experience different cultural arts from around the globe.

According to Tiffany Brown, graduate assistant at the Wolfe University Center, the exhibition challenges students to step out of their comfort zone and face the realities of oppression we are confronted with all the time.

It is a demonstrative experience where attendees walk through a simulated tunnel with booths and stations, each focusing on a different topic of oppression.

“One of the highlights and the reason of the event is that a lot of issues are not touched upon and people don’t really know the severity of it. It allows them to step out of their comfort zone,” Brown said.

The 24-year-old director, student assistant at BBC Campus Life, agrees that the showcase forces students to confront societal issues such as abuse and discrimination.

“Those who partake in the tunnel will be challenged to think about contemporary issues of oppression, privilege and power,” Franco said.

She said the objective of each station is to provide information and expose attendees to experience in several ways that will stimulate attendants’ minds or even jolt their emotions.

“Oppression is having your freedom taken away, having barriers put in front of you due to stereotypes, being judged by the color of your skin or where you are from. The list goes on and on...” Franco said.

Many times, oppression takes extreme forms even at home. According to the Washington Post, more than 1,000 women were killed by their partners in the United States in 2005.

A third of those women were killed by their boyfriends or husband.

“People don’t understand the struggle that other people have to go through,” Brown said.

Sudeny Navarrete, a junior journalism major, said that because of her Nicaraguan roots, she has been called “peasant” and “ignorant” in several instances during high school.

“I felt oppressed during school (sic), but I got through it because I learned to ignore it,” Navarrete said.

Issues related to inequality and stenotyping will also be exposed to motivate people to take an in-depth look at them.

According to Brown, the purpose of the event is to create awareness and discussion of these issues that society faces everyday but very seldom discusses.

“Often times, people use the fact of not knowing about the issue (sic) as an excuse to ignore the problem,” Brown said.

A guest speaker will assist participants and ask questions to explore ways to address and improve upon the presented issues of oppression with a Tunnel of Hope at the end.

The event will take place Thursday, Feb. 26 at the WUC Ballrooms. The tunnel will run in increments of 15 minutes and will be ongoing from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To volunteer at the exhibit or to RSVP, students and faculty can contact BBC Campus Life at (305) 919-5804.

**FIU alumni creates new indie film festival to begin in late February**

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Florida International University alumni Jarrod Knowles makes his debut as producer and founder of the first ever Widescene Film and Music Video Festival.

I literally sat on Facebook all day, every day and sent out tons of messages. I’ve actually sent out over 11,000 messages to invite and make people aware of the event.

Jarrod Knowles
President and Founder
Widescene Film and Music Video Festival

“We are looking for the underdog, the unsung hero, those who are working hard but are not getting the recognition simply because they don’t have a voice. We want to be that voice,” Knowles said. “Our mission for the festival is to inspire the creation and distribution of art while ultimately enhancing the creative mind.”

The twenty-four-year-old director implemented the idea Oct. 12, 2014, and in less than four months received hundreds of film submissions.

“We received submissions from all over the world,” said Karen Sloszaki, director of marketing for WSF. “We’ve had over 300 submissions and almost 1,000 people confirmed to attend.”

Sloszaki said, “The rules make up half of the WSF executive team, three of whom are FIU alumni. Together, they advertised the event on a nonexistent marketing budget, turning social media into their marketing platform and heavily using Facebook to their advantage.

“I literally sat on Facebook all day, every day and sent out tons of messages. I’ve actually sent out over 11,000 messages to invite and make people aware of the festival,” Knowles said.

By using social media, the team managed to acquire submissions from 28 countries. Some of the featured participants are traveling from their respective countries to partake in the event.

“We have a filmmaker who’s coming from Rome, another from Bangladesh and countless people from around the US,” Knowles said.

FIU alumni creates new indie film festival to begin in late February