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An attack on Orlando is an attack on all of us, said University president, Mark Rosenberg to a full room in the Graham Center during the vigil held on June 13, for the victims of the gay nightclub shooting in Orlando.

"Hate crimes are heinous; they tear at the fabric of society and at the fabric of our souls," said Rosenberg. "At times like this, we have to find the strength within ourselves and in solidarity with our community to rededicate ourselves to the norms that enhance and fortify our civility."

Omar Mateen, a 29-year old security guard born in New York, killed 49 and wounded 53 at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Officials reported him pledging allegiance to the leader of ISIS during his 911 call, as well as stating his solidarity with the Boston Marathon bombers.

"These victims could have been our loved ones, could have been our neighbors, could have been us."

Mark B. Rosenberg
President
Florida International University

A somber Rosenberg asked the crowd of students, faculty and staff to examine the safety of their communities, the importance of self-examination and inner strength and the challenges of hate in society.

"These victims could have been our loved ones, could have been our neighbors, could have been us," said Rosenberg. "As Panthers, we have a shared set of values at our FIU. These values reflect positively on who we are as individuals and who we are as an institution that brings us together."

"We want to reiterate to our commitment of creating a healthy and safe environment for all members of our community, and for the LGBTQ community most certainly," he said.

The associate director for Multicultural Programs and Services and LGBTQ Initiatives, Laura Vega had said, "I ask that you please keep the victims and their families in your thoughts and in your hearts."
Democrats narrows their focus to pass gun-control measures

Gun control advocates, who have fought for decades to impose broad limits on weapons purchases, may finally have hit upon a winning strategy as they push for a narrower ban on gun sales to suspected terrorists.

Compared with previous attempts to impose universal background checks or restrict gun show transactions, the new bill has two features that make it more politically palatable: It would apply to a very small group of people instead of all Americans; and it is tied to the nation’s broader anti-terrorist initiatives.

US in diplomatic talks with Venezuela while backing recall referendum

The reopening of diplomatic talks with Venezuela won’t clash with the Obama administration’s support of a recall referendum that could oust President Nicolas Maduro, a top U.S. diplomat said Friday.

Thomas Shannon, the U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, described Wednesday’s talks with Maduro as a first step toward finding common ground with the Venezuelan government. But Shannon emphasized that the administration would not back off on plans to push for an Organization of American States investigation into the erosion of democratic institutions in Venezuela.

Clinton toys with the idea of two women on the Democratic ticket

On a day when Hillary Clinton is going to campaign with Elizabeth Warren, the vice presidential appearance raises the question: Is America ready for two women on a presidential ticket?

Clinton is the first woman to clinch a major party nomination for president. And now she’s considering adding a second woman to the ticket with Warren, the Democratic senator from Massachusetts, as her running mate.

They will appear together Monday in Cincinnati, the kind of test run nominees often use to measure campaign chemistry as they narrow their choices.

OFFICE, PAGE 2

One of the highlighted conversations was by Susan Goldberg, the first woman editor in chief of National Geographic Magazine, who spoke on “Equity and Equality of the Sexes in Communication: Are women getting there?,” analyzing the role of women in the communications industry.

As a woman in communications, the equity and equality of the sexes in communication panel was the most influential for me. The panel opened my eyes to a lot of unique realities that women face in the workplace. I took a lot of their advice into the way I now carry myself in my career. The panelists were incredibly bold and assertive, and I was deeply inspired,” said Natasha Roque, a FIU student and the communications fellow for the FIU Office of Federal Relations in Washington, D.C.

Other discussions, in the events throughout the week, included strategies to mitigate cyber threats, solutions on the impact of Hispanic voters in the U.S.

FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 26

Tribune News Service

Lucius Jackson, an international relations student and delegate of the FIU Model United Nations team, will be working with the U.S. Department of State this summer and is excited to put his studies into practice, hoping his internship counts as a steppingstone toward a career in foreign service.

“The university views this as a time to embrace not only professional development, but also personal growth that will lead to increased confidence, success and skills as a political player,” he said.

FIU Governmental Relations has had a presence in D.C. for more than 15 years; due to FIU and its future generations have opportunities.

FIU was made possible by several sponsors and donors, including Maria Elena Toro who specializes in federal government services and the small business sector. Toro has made a multi-year commitment to FIU’s vision of Washington, with special emphasis on women’s leadership.

During the launch week, she led a special discussion “Lessons in Leadership: What Washington Taught Me,” where she talked about her years of experience working in corporate America, the federal government and the small business sector.

Acted as a team player,” said Roque. “This will lead to increased confidence, success and skills as a political player.”

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**Editorial**

**Bignoty, hatred: ongoing issues**

S u a d y, June 12, 2016 marks the day 49 innocent lives were taken. It marks the day 53 people were climbing to life due to gunshot wounds and it marks the day the largest mass casualty shooting in United States history took place in Orlando, Florida.

This tragic event that happened in the downtown area of Orlando at Pulse, a well-known gay nightclub, has been the latest of many tragic events that have taken place in the past few years. Yet, the questions still remain: why does this keep happening, why is it so easy for people to purchase guns and what kind of world are we living in when it is easier for people to see two hands holding a gun than two men holding hands?

According to NBC News, the 29-year old gunman, Omar Mateen, entered Pulse with an AR-15 classified rifle and a handgun around 2 a.m. He was shot and killed three hours later when the SWAT team entered the club and targeted him. Officials said that the suspect made a 911 phone for an all-out, and that his son was disturbed after seeing two men kissing in Miami a couple of months ago.

Growing up in Miami, and having visited Orlando so many times in my own lifetime, has made this awfully surreal and harder to process.

A couple of days before this tragedy, another shooting happened just a few minutes away from Pulse nightclub, at the Plaza Live Orlando. Christina Grimmie, a 22-year-old singer lost her life after a gunman entered an area of the theater where she was singing megatone after concert. The lack of security and the lenient gun laws are brought to light when cases like the Orlando shooting or the San Bernardino attack, that took place less than a year ago, happen so frequently.

According to NBC News, Mateen’s father, Seddique Mr. Mateen said that “it has nothing to do with religion,” and that his son was disturbed after seeing two men kissing in Miami a couple of months ago.

Seeing a gay couple exchange affection publicly is not what caused someone to shoot up a gay nightclub. It is the negative social stigma the LGBTQ community has had to endure for years that cause tragedies to happen.

It is not acceptable for the LGBTQ community nor the Muslim community to have to routinely defend themselves and their rights. It is not acceptable for people to fear for their lives because they want to live out their truth. We are all Americans with the same human rights.

We should be standing united alongside each other and not giving into the fear and stereotypes that cause these tragic events.

The aftermath of the Orlando massacre shows us that it is possible for humanity to come together and pick each other up at the most devastating times. Many blood drives had people lined up in the wake of the shooting at Pulse nightclub to donate blood. According to ABC News, blood drives received an overwhelming response, and doctors were asked to come in back-to-back because everyone there wanted to donate blood.

Vigils around the nation have been held in honor of the victims of the shooting. A strong community coming together in the wake of a tragedy is the change we need to see in humanity to change this vicious cycle of attacks.

We need to change the way we treat each other regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or religion. We must remember we are all humans first. We cannot let fear win.

As the Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said in a statement on the morning of the tragedy, “We will not be defined by a hateful shooter. We will be defined by the way we love each other.”

For the full story, visit fsucom.com.

Cindy Cuadra is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. Her column, Pop Talk, is a commentary on pop culture, current events. For suggestions or comments, please contact Cindy at opinion@fsucom.com.

**Editorial Board**

Stephanie Roque is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. She is a senior at FIU and a junior at Florida Atlantic University. She is a student journalist and a freelance writer. She is interested in political science and social research. She is interested in the intersection between politics and media and the role of media in the political sphere.

Cindy Cuadra is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. Her column, Pop Talk, is a commentary on pop culture, current events. For suggestions or comments, please contact Cindy at opinion@fsucom.com.
Frost debuts Suddenly Last Summer exhibit

CHLOE GONZALEZ
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The Frost Art Museum opened the doors to its newest exhibit in the Summer of Women Series titled “Suddenly Last Summer” Saturday, June 18.

Klaudio Rodriguez, the Frost’s curator, invited Adrienne Rose Gionta, to curate an exhibition for the museum’s “The Summer of Women” series. Rodriguez asked the independent artist and curator to work with him because he wanted to display an exhibit that was created by women and that celebrated women in art.

For her exhibit, Gionta looked to a 1984 song titled, “Suddenly Last Summer” by a band called The Motels for inspiration, and searched for artists who related to her interpretation of the song.

Gionta selected three artists, Donna Haynes, Leah Brown and Michelle Weinberg, and asked them to listen to the song and design an installation that reflected their interpretation of it. Each created rooms that explore different aspects of summer, such as nature, love and romance and the fleeting nature of summer days. Haynes’ room is the first in the exhibit.

Her pieces are reminiscent of a young girl’s bedroom, and they reflect the purity and innocence of “cheesy and idealized summer romance,” said Haynes.

The next room hosts Weinberg’s whimsical collages of color and geometric shapes. Gionta explained that Weinberg’s room represented “a place for a moment and a time, like a makeshift artist residency.”

The final room in the exhibit is home to Brown’s work which consists of 13 black, laser-cut museum boards that represent scenes of Florida wildlife, in what she calls, “The Land of Eternal Summer.”

Gionta says that “each artist’s interpretation … evokes a contemplative, timeless reverie, and deep longing for innocence, romance, nature, freedom … associated specifically with summer.”

Haynes says that the exhibition offers FIU students the opportunity to reminisce about their own summer experiences.

Gionta’s exhibit is the second installation in the “Summer of Women” series, and will be open until Sept. 18.

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Jordana Pomeroy, director of the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, announced definite plans to open a café at the museum. While sharing some student membership privileges, Pomeroy also announced the café opening mid-fall at the Frost Art Museum, “You get all the benefits and there’s a whole list of it. You get to come to members-only openings and [it] makes you eligible for all kinds of things. Soon, actually, discounts. We’re going to have a café here, and you’ll have a discount in the café.”

Pomeroy wants to rally more support for the arts but specifically with students because, “It is really important that we grow our membership. Your dollars make a huge impact on this museum.” said Pomeroy.

She also shared that she would like to see more students get involved with the Frost Museum.

For the full story, visit fiu.edu.

Frost to open Vicky’s Cafe

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Jordana Pomeroy, director of the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, welcomed guests to the reception.

Bottom Left: The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at the FIU MMC Campus.

Bottom Center: Dr. Jordana Pomeroy speaking to guests

Photo credit: WorldRedEye, Photographer: Alejandro Chavarria
SAMANTHA BRANCA
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A couple of years ago, due to budget cuts to the College of Architecture and Arts here at FIU, the University dance minor disappeared and no one really noticed. It wasn’t until last semester that Crystal Patient, professor of dance at both the Modesto Maidique Campus and Biscayne Bay Campuses, took it upon herself to bring back this minor.

“Dance was a much desired and missed culture at FIU. The goal was to reconnect and bring it into the 21st century of higher education.” Patient says.

"I was trained in dance that some students were leaving FIU simply because dance had disappeared to only two classes a semester, and they could not accurately pursue a dance degree. Philip Church, interim chair of the theater department at the time of reactivating the minor, and I saw the relevance and impact dance had only at FIU, but globally."

It was a difficult process but by spreading the word, having a group of students come together and highlight the importance of this minor, it is finally back here and to stay, as of the spring semester of 2016. "I was not alone in the reactivation effort - Dean Brian Shriner, Phillip Church, fellow faculty and staff in the theater department, and without a doubt, the student body made a valiant effort to see the program come back to life."

SAMANTHA BRANCA
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The growing support for the minor came from the students here at FIU. With dance shows put on every semester, more and more people came to see what these dancers have to offer and why they wanted this minor under their belt.

Throughout the semester, dance concerns were held and featured many pieces with genres such as tango, modern, contemporary and even films of dances previously created for festivals. The shows often packed a full house with some audience members standing, just to see what students had to show.

"Knowledge gained from our graduates and future leaders will demonstrate how the multi-disciplinary art form can be utilized within modern economies."

Patient believes, “The dance minor was to graduate our students with the ability to communicate, collaborate, create and inspire effectively with a diverse group of individuals."

There are currently 22 students enrolled in the dance minor program, Crystal Patient hopes that number will grow exponentially.

“The minor offers master classes, performances (three times an academic year) and creative opportunities. New relationships are being forged between the program and the Honors College (dance club). Dance Marathon, Miami City Ballet, bridging the gap between South Florida University dance programs, [and] other local artists and alumni.” Patient states. Every show is free and open to the public. The ultimate goal is for “these dancers to be able to show their talents, and inspire others to join this program as well,” said professor Patient.

With only 15 credits needed, professor Patient affirms that a dance minor can help with almost any career field, and hopes that more people will see the need to keep it alive at FIU.

"I believe the dance program at FIU creates an opportunity for all of our students to investigate cultural diversity, ideas, think sustainably and to express themselves clearly and confidently.” Patient says. "The program is a seemingly disparate pieces into a meaningful whole.”

If you are interested in enrolling into the dance minor program, email Crystal Patient at cpatient@fiusm.com. Students browse the related dance courses in the course catalog found [here]

"There will be no audition process for the program. Once the student has completed the paperwork and is officially a dance minor, they will contact me to discuss goals and aspirations regarding the program.” Patient assures.

Continuing, "Joe Murray, chair of the theater department, and I have been developing and participating in bringing dance courses to the forefront of FIU’s educational mission.” She informs us, “By creating an online and hybrid dance appreciation course, dance at FIU is reaching our students far beyond the classrooms/ studios and leading them into the forefront of higher academics of the 21st century.”

FIU Remembers

FIU Remembers
The Wellness and Recreation Center presents...
Splash Bash!
Friday, June 30
4:00pm – 5:30pm
Panther Hall Pool
FREE food and giveaways!
FIRST 50 guests get a FREE T-shirt!
LIVE DJ Raffle
Contest: Lia Jianne, LiaJianne@fiusm.edu

The Beacon – Wednesday, June 29, 2016 5

With faculty help, dance minor returns
NADINE MATAS
Entertainment Director
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Supercon, a gathering place for geeks of all kinds, and declared the biggest convention in Florida, will be hosted in the Miami Beach Convention Center.

“This will be our 11th year,” said Sara Mineo, communications coordinator on the Florida Supercon staff. Their site states, “Florida Supercon was founded in 2006 by Mike Broder. The first Florida Supercon event was hosted on November 3-5, 2006 at The Hollywood Beach Resort in Hollywood, FL. The first Florida Supercon had an estimated 1,500 attendees.”

From there, Supercon moved several times before finding a place to remain in, for some years to come. They switched locations in its first years from the Fort Lauderdale Marriott North, to the Hyatt Regency Bonaventure in Weston, then finally settling at the Miami Airport Convention Center its fourth year.

In its sixth year, the convention increased from three days to four. The convention got so popular, it had to be moved to the Miami Beach Convention Center, maintaining its four-day run period.

The convention’s staff plans for and feature many things at the convention throughout the four days, such as “celebrity guests, comic book creators, voice actors, industry guests, cosplayers, artists, writers, panels, Q&A’s, films & shorts, costume & cosplay contests, vendors, parties, anime, workshops, video gaming and more!”

Patient says that last year they had over 50,000 attendees. Usually, the event takes place from Thursday to Sunday, but this year, the much-anticipated Supercon weekend has changed from Friday to Monday.

Mineo says “it is changed because Monday is a holiday and most people have that day off.”

Such a large convention, bekons the question of how they get everything finished in a timely and organized manner.

“We have eight employees on staff year-round and about 20 that only work during our three shows.” Mineo says. “We have about 600 volunteers at the show. Half of our volunteers are university students.”

Supercon provides volunteer hours for the students that need them for their school’s requirements.

Mineo points out, “we spend all year planning Florida Supercon.”

Supercon is not the only event they spend their time planning. “On top of this, we have two shows in Fort Lauderdale that we also organize. Animate Florida in September and Paradise City Comic Con in December.” Mineo says.

There are hundreds of guests and artist that will be attending Florida Supercon this year and to check out the guests, Mineo says to visit the Florida supercon website, as there are too many to list.

“We would like to expand our show into other areas. Next year, we will be hosting a Raleigh Supercon in addition to our other shows. We are extremely excited about this expansion and we have already begun planning for the event even though we have not announced it yet.” Stated Mineo

Supercon 2016 will take place July 1-4 in the Miami Beach Convention Center.
#ORLANDOSTRONG

## Community remembers victims of Pulse shooting

**ORLANDO, PAGE 1**

Prayers. Especially [for] one of our own.”

“Our [alumni], Laura Vargas; please give a special prayer for her,” said Vega. “She is currently in the hospital in Orlando.”

Crowds gathered around the GC pit to bear the live stream of FIU’s vigil and stood in line to participate in the candlelight ceremony.

Helen Gonzalez, a faculty member of Undergraduate Education, said it’s a mix of emotions for her.

“Frustration, anger. Anger mostly. Where you’re trying to make sense of something that there is no way to make sense of,” said Gonzalez. “People are looking for leaders to step up. Either people are going to step up and become a leader, or the people already in place need to address it.”

The president of Stonewall Pride Alliance, Daniel Capote, said he made sure he was spreading support to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, especially by updating the organization’s social media accounts.

“We know why we exist,” said Capote. “Stonewall exists to provide support for LGBTQ students. And now we are here, unfortunately.”

Capote spent the whole weekend spreading comfort and support to all members of his community.

“You’ll be okay. We’ll be okay. We are community forged in fire. All it does is harden our resolve to persist,” Capote said.

The vigil concluded with a song, “Amazing Grace” sung by Korrin Addison, a faculty member of Student Affairs, then proceeded with a candlelight vigil in the GC pit where students and faculty took part in placing a candle on the floor in the shape of a heart.

An entire religion has to suffer the prejudice from society because of a terrorist organization that happily takes credit for any tragedy that befalls their enemies.

An entire religion gets blamed because of a small percentile that barely reaches one percent.

Mulders said it’s a mix of emotions for her.

“I think it is especially evident when you take a look at some words posted on social media, after the tragedy occurred. The following is a statement posted from a self-labeled Christian organization on social media:

“Seems only right for Sodom America!” and, “God opened His armory to deal with proud f—america (in mass shooting at Pulse nightclub).”

This was posted by the Westboro Baptist Church on their Twitter account on June 12, during the time that the news of the shooting were being reported.

Yet, this is considered a small group unrepresentative of all Christians. This is “the group that is abominable”, but those same people who point fingers at all Muslims for being like Mateen or the Islamic State group, do not accept that the Westboro Baptist Church is the image of all Christians.

In the end, there is no one to blame. We cannot blame love, and cannot blame religion. Muslims, a group with over 1 billion people, did not kill or wish to kill these club-goers.

It is Ramadan, the holy month; if anything, I would argue that this horrible act during this time would be universally seen as an even more disgusting and disrespectful sin.

The LGBTQ+ community has always just wanted their rights, to be respected, regardless of their gender identity or sexual preference. After this, they feel far from reaching that goal again.

Individuals with no respect for human life are out there and kill, unfortunately, always be out there. It is how we support each other, protect and understand each other, and prevent individuals or hate groups from tearing us apart by building each other up, instead of tearing each other down.

We, as a people, must stand with Orlando and all others who have been affected by this horrible tragedy. Pray for Orlando in your own way, and love for humanity so we can make this cycle of hate stop.
FOOTBALL

Football welcomes new defensive coordinator

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With less than 50 days away from FIU's opening night against Indiana University, newly hired defensive coordinator, Ron Cooper has to prepare for this season with his young, unproven defense.

Training camp begins Aug. 1, and Cooper has to find new starters to replace top defensive leaders, including both former defensive ends and sack leaders, Michael Wakefield and Denzel Perine, and former starting cornerbacks, Richard Leonard and Jeremiah McKinnon.

Cooper, however, seems unfazed by the challenge.

Cooper said: “It’s tough to replace those guys, but that’s a part of football. I’m confident in the team we have now, and the players that we recruited from junior college.

The Panthers first two games will be against two teams from the Big 10 conference. Their first game is on Thursday, Sept. 1 against Indiana University; they face University of Maryland the following week on Friday, Sept. 9.

“I don’t want to look toward the future of how we do this season,” Cooper said. “Right now our main focus is on Indiana.

These first two games could be a challenge for FIU since the team is seeking its first winning season under Turner. Indiana and Maryland may not be top-ranked teams in the Big 10 conference. Both teams, however, will still provide Big 10 talent that plays.

“We have a whole month of camp to prepare for them and we’re going to play fast,” Cooper said. “That’s what Florida is known for, and that’s how we’re going to play throughout the season.”

Intramural, PAGE 8

a layup, the full court press was on and Baller Alert was making a run.

A 17-point lead was suddenly cut down to a five-point lead with just three minutes remaining.

Xavier Towns of All Summer Term A said: “During their run, we were able to keep our composure and talk to each other. My job was to limit the other from scoring and that’s exactly what I did.”

Baller Alert had several opportunities to tie the game in the final minute, but two missed layups eliminated the team’s chances.

On holding to a two-point lead with 12 seconds remaining, Chance III got a decisive rebound on a missed free throw.

He was immediately fouled and knocked down both free throws to seal the win. Courtney Bigby of Baller Alert knocked down a last second three pointer to end the game at 72-71.

“If the game was about a minute and a half longer, it would have ended differently,” James Davis said. “We blew a 17-point lead.”

Chance III will remember this game the most since he is graduating soon.

“I’ve been trying to win this championship for a while now,” Chance III said. “It was definitely a pleasure to go out on top.”

All summer Term A lost only one game during the season at the hands of Baller Alert, which won all five games during the regular season.

MMA club seeks to break workout stigma

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If getting fit is the first of your summer goals this year, you may not think of getting into mixed martial arts as a way to do it. But, you may be wrong if you don’t give it a shot.

MMA, a fairly new sport that combines disciplines such as striking and grappling, has found its way to FIU. From boxing to jiu-jitsu, there are plenty of ways that students can get and stay in shape with different options.

These MMA-based clubs were founded as far as 7 years ago and have become quite the success for students looking to get out of their comfort zones and further their workouts to new heights.

I have been a fan of this sport for about nine years now and I have watched it grow from a seemingly unknown sport to one of the fastest growing. Yet, it hasn’t gained a large amount of acceptance despite its exciting fashion.

Rodney Mens, an FIU student, said: “When I think of mixed martial arts, I think of two men or women fighting each other till their bodies can no longer function. It’s way too barbaric for me especially when I see a lot of blood.”

Sure, a lot of these people have a point in regards to the violence argument. Mixed martial arts is based on combat seemingly unknown possibility of someone getting injured. But, it is also a form of art.

“I think it’s an art form that emphasize self control and a connection between the mind and the body,” MMA enthusiast and Campus Life public relations assistant Vinson Pressley said. “Any one who participates in this sport is a true master of their spirit and body.

FIU has covered all the bases of MMA and has established a list of clubs and organizations that specialize in one or more of the sports’ disciplines.

Capoiera, Budokon, Taekwondo, Wrestling, Karate. Any of these clubs would be a great option for anyone looking to get into the sport of simply change their workout routine.

FIU even has a mixed martial arts club that combines all of the fundamentals of these aforementioned clubs into one.

Having a great body is a plus when participating in MMA, but the health benefits are pretty good, too. Because of the amount of physicality that these disciplines require, your entire body will utilize energy that stimulates everything from your muscles to your nerves.

Also, MMA relieves a great amount of stress with techniques that target specific areas of your body. Within the first few minutes of unloading some punches or kicks on a bag, you’ll feel significantly better with all of that negative energy leaving your body.

So, before you think of yourself standing in front of a 265-pound man getting ready to fight for your life, remember that MMA isn’t just about that. For you, it can be a way to bring something new and exciting to your exercise routine.
THE ROAD AHEAD

Baseball team rebuilding, looking to go further next season

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The FIU baseball team’s season ended on a wild pitch versus Marshall University, but the loss does not mean much when considering the team’s future.

The Panthers finished with a .500 overall record (29-29), including the Conference USA tournament. However, Head Coach Turtle Thomas stepped down a couple of weeks after the season. Thomas served as head coach for nine seasons and had 282 wins, two conference titles and three NCAA regional appearances during his time at FIU.

With Thomas out of the picture, the search for a new head coach is underway. Former FIU standout Aramis Garcia, now in the San Francisco Giants minor-league system, expressed his desire for Frank Damas to become the next head coach of the team. Damas, who resigned his assistant coach position in 2014, is now a local-area scout for the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The season started out rough, as the Panthers faced No. 24 University of Mississippi, more commonly known as Ole Miss, for the first series of the year. Ole Miss, a NCAA Tournament regular, swept the Panthers and scored 32 runs in three games.

However, the team rebounded by winning the series versus teams such as St. Thomas University, Seton Hall University and Manhattan University. The Panthers maintained an even record until conference play began in the latter part of the season.

The Panthers also broke even in conference play, going 15-15 versus conference opponents.

A couple of FIU players broke out over the course of the season. Catcher Zack Soria, who replaced J.C. Escarra after he underwent a season-ending shoulder surgery, solidified himself as a middle-of-the-lineup hitter for the Panthers. Soria finished the year with a 294 batting average, three home runs and 23 RBIs.

Although the majority of the team is staying put, two graduating seniors departed from the team. Rey Perez and Austin Rodriguez, both infielders, were honored before the May 20 win over the University of Southern Mississippi for their contributions to the team. Neither Perez nor Rodriguez was selected in the 2016 MLB first-year player draft.

However, Williams Durruthy was selected in this year’s draft. Durruthy was selected in the 31st round by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Durruthy has not decided whether he will turn pro or return to school for one more year. If Durruthy returns, the Panther bullpen will have a solid back end with Durruthy closing.

Another positive change is in the works for FIU Baseball. The team’s aging stadium will undergo a major renovation soon. The list of improvements include additional shade for fans, a renovated locker room and an indoor batting cage. The multimillion dollar renovation is still in the funding stage. The stadium was last renovated in 2007.

Despite the rough start to the season, the team managed to make the C-USA tournament and break even on the year. Heading into next season, competition for positions will be the common theme. Soria and a healthy Escarra will battle for the starting catcher job, and competition for the two open infielder positions will be the highlight for the Panther offseason. No matter who wins the starting competitions, the Panthers will have a solid and more experienced team versus this year’s squad.