STATE NEWS

Lawsuit to clear up tuition control tossed

By KIM WILMATH
Alligator Staff Writer
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Former Florida Gov. Bob Graham and the Board of Governors, the State University System’s highest governing body, now face a stumbling block in their fight for tuition-setting power.

The board joined Graham’s lawsuit against the Florida Legislature in July. The suit asks a court to clarify which body has authority to set tuition at the state’s 11 universities.

On Thursday, a Leon County circuit court judge ruled that Graham and the board failed to show standing in the case. They have until Feb. 4 to submit evidence proving the Legislature has violated the board’s rights by controlling tuition.

Bill Edmonds, the board’s spokesman, said the judge’s ruling surprised the board.

Still, members of the board would have no problem providing more specific examples of the Legislature’s overreaching by the February deadline, Edmonds said.

The board was created by a constitutional amendment in 2002. Florida voters approved the amendment by referendum.

The board has continually asserted that the amendment made it independent from the Legislature. However, Edmonds said it has not been able to perform its duties adequately because of the Legislature’s interference.

“It seems clear that the voters did not want business as usual to continue, but that’s what happened,” Edmonds said. “There’s ambiguity over who’s responsible for the university system’s future.”

In a July news release, Florida Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, called the lawsuit, “an attempt to get unbridled tuition increases.

“God help our students if they win,” Pruitt wrote. Pruitt could not be reached for comment.

The most recent clash between the two bodies occurred when the

SEE BOG, PAGE 13

AUSTIN WRIGHT WAS DRUNK WHEN HIS CAR HIT GPD LT. COREY DAHLEM IN APRIL.

By JESSICA PONN
Alligator Staff Writer
jponn@alligator.org

Head hung, hands clasped loosely on the table in front of him, Austin John Wright’s hazel eyes peered down at his table in front of him, Austin John Wright’s hazel eyes peered down at his.

But all of that would be secondary as the judge slowly began the proceedings.

Head hung, hands clasped loosely on the table in front of him, Austin John Wright’s hazel eyes peered down at his

HIT

GPD LT. COREY DAHLEM IN APRIL.

By JESSICA PONN
Alligator Staff Writer
jponn@alligator.org

Wright gets 10 yrs. in officer’s death

A UF student waits to cross University Ave. at Buckman Drive Saturday. The road was recently dedicated to the memory of GPD Lt. Corey Dahlem.

By KATIE EMMETS
Alligator Writer
kemmets@alligator.org

A newly enrolled UF transfer student died Dec. 29 in a motorcycle accident in Dunnellon, a small city in Marion County.

Cory Altman, 28, was killed when Donna Brown, 70, made a left hand turn out of a Winn-Dixie parking lot onto U.S. 41. Brown did not yield to oncoming traffic, according to a Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles crash report.

The front of Altman’s Suzuki motorcycle crashed into the left side of Brown’s Pontiac, throwing Altman onto the pavement. He was traveling at 45 mph.

UF Dean of Students Eugene Zdziarski said Altman was from Coral Gables and was transferring from Miami-Dade Community College as a junior biology major.

The 2007 calendar year held the largest number of UF student deaths in recent history, Zdziarski said. Car and motorcycle accidents cause the largest number of deaths when it comes to students.

Students should remember to get a lot of rest before they travel, Zdziarski added. “Students should not be pushing themselves too hard, so they can be attentive and not find themselves in a bad situation.”

A UF transfer student dies in crash

By KATIE EMMETS
Alligator Writer
kemmets@alligator.org

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NATIONAL

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If you have an event you would like to see posted here, please e-mail it to dculcasure@alligator.org, and put “What’s Happening” in the subject line.

Deadline to Remember
UF Drop/Add and late registration for the spring will close Friday at 11:59 p.m.

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UF ADMINISTRATION

Machen's salary hiked up

By IELEANA MORALES
Alligator Writer
imorales@alligator.org

In 2012, UF President Bernie Machen's salary will be bumped up to a cool million.

Machen's salary will be increased in two stages. In the first stage, Machen will receive a large bonus — an additional $400,000 to his salary. In the last year of his contract, Machen will receive a long-term bonus — an additional $400,000 to his salary.

In his original contract, Machen had the option to take a one-year paid leave and receive $450,000 in addition to his salary. Instead of the vacation, Machen chose to take $100,000 each year for four years beginning in 2009.

UF Trustee Fernandez resigns

MANNY FERNANDEZ PLANS ON SPENDING TIME WITH WORK, FAMILY.

By KIM WILMATH
Alligator Staff Writer
kwilaath@alligator.org

Manny Fernandez, a UF trustee and former chair of the university's top governing body, announced his resignation on Jan 2.

Fernandez served on the Board of Trustees since 2001 and was chairman from 2003 to 2007.

In a letter to Dianna Morgan, present chairwoman of the board of trustees, Fernandez wrote that his time at SI Ventures, an investment firm Fernandez co-founded and co-manages, is coming to an end. He'll now be spending less time in Florida and more time in California with his family.

In addition, he wrote, his service on four Fortune 500 boards takes up a significant amount of his time.

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Gov. Charlie Crist will nominate a replacement for Fernandez, and he has not announced any prospects yet.

The next meeting of UF's Board of Trustees is March 13.

"I can't tell you how difficult this decision process has been for me," Fernandez wrote. "I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to serve my alma mater in this meaningful way."

In a letter to the rest of the board members, Morgan wrote that Fernandez helped establish some of UF’s most important programs, such as the Tuition Differential Program and Florida Opportunity Scholars Program.

The Tuition Differential Program will allow UF to incrementally raise tuition 40 percent over four years. UF will use the money raised to hire more faculty members and academic advisors.

The program will go into effect fall 2008 and is expected to bring in about $17 million.

The Florida Opportunity Scholars Program awards scholarships to students who are the first in their families to attend college.

"Manny's leadership and contributions to our university are too numerous to list," Morgan wrote. "The greatest honor we can bestow upon him is our continued commitment on all the initiatives which are so important to him."
Senate president launches bid for top SG position

By ILEANA MORALES
Alligator Writer

During the holiday break, the current Student Senate president announced he would run for next year’s Student Body president.

Kevin Reilly, a UF political science senior, said he’s confident about his chances of winning the spring election. Reilly said he doesn’t know the exact date of the election.

“I decided to run because, I mean, I love this university,” he said. “I care for the students, and I am the best person to lead the students and find practical solutions.”

Reilly said his Senate experience makes him a good candidate.

He said the experience has taught him how to work with UF administration to find solutions to problems and learn from other student leaders.

As part of Student Senate, he said he has helped achieve extended library hours during final exams and helped students the option of paying with credit cards at on-campus dining locations.

Reilly said he hopes to execute similar projects with a platform based on improving the everyday lives of students.

“We represent 50,000 students and allocate their funds,” Reilly said. “We need to do our best to do our responsibilities and translate that into practical results.”

One issue he said he would like to work on is UF’s WebMail system, which he said is “outdated.”

If he wins, the transition to Student Body president will not be an issue, Reilly said.

Shands employee OK after parking-garage kidnapping

By KATIE EMMETS
Alligator Writer

A Shands employee was kidnapped from a UF parking garage Thursday night, placed in the trunk of a car and dropped off uninjured at a local Wal-Mart later that night, according to a University Police Department news release.

At 8:30 p.m., four men dressed in all black and wearing black ski masks grabbed the victim on the ramp of a parking garage at Shands at UF, blindfolded him and tied his hands behind his back, the release stated.

The men then took the victim’s cell phone and placed him in the trunk of a car described as possibly a 1999 black, four-door Nissan Altima.

The victim was dropped off at the Wal-Mart on 13th Street at 10 p.m. and sent text messages with it, according to the report.

The victim also said he was unharnessed at the Wal-Mart on 13th Street at 8:30 p.m., four men dressed in all black and wearing black ski masks grabbed the victim on the ramp of a parking garage at Shands at UF, blindfolded him and tied his hands behind his back, the release stated.

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On Campus

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Still In Doubt
Judge throws out tuition case, fight continues

On Thursday, a Leon County circuit court judge tossed out a lawsuit intended to clarify who has the right to control tuition — the state Legislature or the Board of Governors, the governing body of Florida’s public universities.

State Senate President Ken Pruitt, a Republican from Port St. Lucie, declared the judge’s ruling — or lack thereof — “a victory for students and their families.”

We don’t.

When the board was created by a voter referendum in 2002, the language in the amendment was ambiguous about the board’s powers.

Since then, board members and lawmakers have gone back and forth on tuition. The matter culminated last year, when the board and the Legislature independently raised tuition by 5 percent.

What if one had raised tuition by 10 percent and the other by 5 percent?

The judge, Charles Francis, left it open for the board — which joined former Gov. Bob Graham in the lawsuit — to try again by early next month by proving the board has standing in the case.

We’re not sure if the board figured its standing would be obvious to Francis or if Francis just wasn’t paying attention. In any event, the plaintiffs have indicated they plan to submit the evidence Francis requested, so eventually, we hope, he will take up the case.

And when he does, we hope he will keep this in mind: Under the Legislature’s control, tuition in Florida has sunk to the bottom of the barrel compared with other states.

So while Tallahassees lawmakers enjoy the good public relations of being able to tout affordable higher education, the state’s two most important institutions — UF and Florida State University — are in self-imposed hiring freezes.

Compounding the issue are budget cuts for the state’s universities from — guess who — the Legislature.

Don’t get us wrong. Affordable college is a great thing, and we’ve been skeptical in the past when UF officials and others wanted to jack up tuition.

But by keeping tuition so low, the Legislature has made it virtually impossible for UF — and the rest of Florida’s universities — to keep up with its peers.

In a 2006 USA Today survey of tuition rates at flagship universities in all 50 states, UF came in at 75. Who came in at No. 74? FSU.

UF can’t maintain it’s top-20 public university status with tuition that low. And a top-20 public university is critical to this state for so many reasons.

A crucial one: a top-tier university keeps top-tier high school graduates in the state.

In turn, their money — and intelligence — stays in the state. See how this works, Legislature?

We applaud our lawmakers for implementing a plan that would allow UF, FSU and the University of South Florida to raise tuition by 40 percent over the next three years.

They’ve finally acknowledged that all of the State University System institutions don’t serve the same purposes. (Florida International University doesn’t need the funding UF does, so it shouldn’t charge the same rate. Pretty cut-and-dry)

But we’re not sure that lawmakers have caught on. That’s why Francis, when he finally takes this case, should side with the Board of Governors and Graham.

They understand what the universities need, not only to survive but to thrive.

And, as UF President Bernie Machen would be quick to tell you, it’s hard to even survive by scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Editorial

Opinions

Guest column

Lost phones make for lots of stress

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who lose their cell phones and those who do not.

Until recently, I never thought I’d find myself in the first category.

(By the way, there are another two kinds of people in the world: those who say there are two kinds of people in the world and those who do not. Once again, I never thought I would find myself in the first group.)

I went to Busch Gardens last month to cash in on a yearlong pass I purchased during the summer.

I went on the Montu for the second ride of the day, and afterward, I realized that my cell phone was gone.

See, I know I had my phone with me when I got off a kiddie roller coaster earlier. Maybe a goat from the petting zoo pocketed me when my mom was adjusting her shirt collar.

But more than likely, my link to the universe fell to its demise as I flew upside-down and sideways above an artificial Egyptian archeological site.

Now, you may be wondering why I still had a cell phone after swearing against them in a November column for microwaving my brain.

Unfortunately, it proved nearly impossible to kick the habit. For one thing, I needed some way to call 1-800-Ask-Gary in case of an emergency, and payphones are hard to find.

A decade ago, there were 2.6 million pay phones nationwide. Now, only about 1 million can be found. Last month, AT&T announced it would be phasing out all of its pay phones by the end of 2008.

Where will superheroes change into tights?

Anyway, after my dear friend went MIA, cell phone separation anxiety ensued in its five horrible stages: anxiety thumbs, talking into stray bananas, uninterrupted bathroom breaks and paying attention to the people in the surrounding area.

Finally, there was the drinking, which actually wasn’t too bad seeing that Busch Gardens gives out free beer samples.

They were stored only in my phone, which is lost somewhere in Africa, which is somewhere in Busch Gardens.

I never write down anyone’s number because I can just type it into my phone. I only have a few of my friends’ numbers memorized, and that’s only because I didn’t feel like typing out their names.

I had the numbers for at least a dozen take-out restaurants programmed. What about all of my friends’ old cell phone numbers that I never deleted? And I can’t forget about those 1-800 numbers I saved from my favorite Billy Mays commercials.

I had something close to 350 contacts in my phonebook, which is absurd. There are probably only a few dozen people I talk to on a regular basis, and that’s only when I feel like talking to them.

It reminds me of the 700 closest friends Facebook says I have.

Speaking of Facebook, now I have to create one of those events where people who don’t want to talk to me will be forced to give me their phone numbers. I’ll call the event “A roller coaster killed my phone.”

Now, only Web sites could fall out of amusement park rides.

Vincent Massaro is a journalism senior. His column appears on Mondays.

The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the Alligator.

Reader response

Today’s question: make sure this font is not bold.

Monday’s question: make sure this font is not bold.

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Students, bookstores prepare for semester rush

By ALYSSA LARENZIE
Alligator Writer

Lines are getting longer, and wallets are getting emptier.

It’s semester rush at local bookstores.

First-year UF students Michelle Decentecceo and Molly Koozer have quickly learned how to shop around for the cheapest books.

Koozer found the statistics book she had already purchased was $40 less at another bookstore. She immediately considered returning it to save money. Price was an important factor for the friends.

“You just have to learn how to bargain shop,” Decentecceo said.

Many students spend about $300 in textbooks per semester, said Gator Textbooks Inc. employee Mike Giampietro.

Graduate student Ashley Croom has come to terms with the high textbook prices.

“I’ve kind of just sucked it up,” she said. “It’s going to be expensive, so whatever.”

Croom has been a patron of local bookstores for five years. She said she usually spends $300 to $500 a semester in books.

The biggest problem with textbook shopping for her is finding the books required for her smaller graduate classes because each store only carries a few copies, Croom said.

To save time, students can call bookstores first to get book prices or check availability. Gator Textbooks Inc. even boasts that they will give buyback quotes over the phone or online, said Duane McMahan, co-owner of the store.

McMahan also recommends buying textbooks after attending the first day of class to make sure students buy the right ones.

“I always went to class first,” he said. “Professors change their minds.”

For local bookstores, rush seasons are when owners make most of their yearly profits, McMahan explained.

“If you don’t make it now,” he said, “you don’t make it.”

Students use book buyback to exchange their textbooks they no longer need for cash. Buyback is generally determined by half of the value paid for the book.

Other factors can impact the price paid to students, such as how many copies the store has in stock, said Orange & Blue Textbooks store manager Todd Williams.

Some students like David Borrego have mixed feelings about book buyback because they feel they are getting back pennies compared to what they spend.

Borrego, a nuclear engineering sophomore, has to buy some expensive textbooks for his classes. He said he once paid $150 for one book and got back only $40.

“I feel like I’m getting ripped off when I sell books back,” he said.

Borrego said he saves textbooks that will be useful in future classes or his career, such as his calculus book.

Though students often complain about the cost of textbooks, stores set prices based on what they are charged by the publisher, Williams said.

“It’s not like we apply a secret formula for buyback,” said Orange & Blue Textbooks employee Ryan Scharbert.

Working his second rush season, Scharbert said students generally accept the money they are offered for buyback.

Another option is for students to sell their books online on Websites like Amazon.com, Half.com and Facebook’s marketplace, where they buy books directly from the owner, said bookstore co-owner McMahan.

Though students may like to think that bookstore owners are making a fortune, McMahan said that he’s not in it for the money.

“We’re definitely not becoming millionaires by any means,” he said.

Students line up to buy textbooks at Textbook Brokers on Sunday afternoon. Bookstores across Gainesville have been busy with students buying textbooks before their classes start.

By ALYSSA LARENZIE
Alligator Writer
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Journalism school bumps interim dean to dean

John Wright, who served as the interim dean of the UF College of Journalism and Communications for more than a year, was named the college's permanent dean last month.

UF Provost Janie Fouke made the announcement Dec. 18 after a yearlong national search.

"I think Dr. Wright's vision and energy excited the faculty, search committee and me," Fouke said. Wright, who has been the interim dean since July 2006, said UF Academics he plans to build a digital communications center that will house two labs to connect students, professors and researchers.

While classes won't be taught in the center, he said students will have access to stations outfitted with the latest technology to complete projects assigned in class.

"The idea here is to become, if not a global leader, the global leader in digital communications," he said.

Wright joined the UF telecommunications faculty in 1982 and later served as associate dean for graduate studies and executive associate dean.

"This college has just a great history and a great tradition, and it's truly an honor to have a chance to take over leadership," Wright said.

Hazing allegations land ATO on probation

For accusations of hazing, UF's Greek Judicial Board recommended that Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity be placed on conduct probation for the spring semester. At a hearing on Dec. 7, the board decided that the fraternity's cooperation with the spring sanctions would determine its fate for the spring semester.

Alpha Tau Omega, known as ATO, was suspended from social and recruitment privileges for fall. Members are allowed to hold two social events in the spring, but the events must be alcohol-free. ATO must also participate in five philanthropies and a seven-week new-member education program. New members are not allowed at the fraternity house, located at 207 SW 13th St., after 10 p.m.

In November, ATO was accused of depriving its new members of sleep and forcing them to be designated drivers for older members.

"There's always a gray area as to what goes on," Fletcher Rush, ATO's president, said the fraternity would accept the sanctions.

At the hearing, Rush said he was not present during any of the alleged hazing and did not have knowledge of it. "There's always a gray area as to what goes on," Rush said.
The first floor also features a grand dining room capable of entertaining the rectangular room. After passing through the elegant foyer, visitors will enter the chapter room, a 1,100-square-foot space stretching from the porch to the second floor, rising $100,000," according to the Kappa Sigma Web site.

Kappa Sigma Fraternity Student Housing Director Ryan Merkel exits the fraternity's recently built house on Saturday-afternoon. Fraternity members hope to move in sometime this week.

"There's been a great renaissance in Greek housing." Merkel said.

The suite consists of a bedroom, bathroom, walk-in closet and office. It is the only place in the house with bright-blue carpet and is part of the fraternity's efforts to incorporate a "professional aspect" in the house, Merkel said.

With the inclusion of an elevator, fireplace, wood-like vinyl flooring inside the house; and a few 50-inch, flat-screen TVs, the house boasts many technological innovations that other fraternity houses do not.

"There's been a great renaissance in Greek housing," Merkel said.

Motion-detecting light sensors in most of the mansion's rooms, hallways and large meeting halls ensure an illuminated path without the flip of a switch. It may take a few weeks for the fraternity to appreciate the cool value of its $500,000 air-conditioning system, but Merkel said the top-of-the-line system will be worth a more expensive utilities bill because every room has its own computerized air-conditioning zone.

Mike Jones, Kappa Sigma's recruitment chairman this semester and UF sophomore, said he thinks the house will attract more members during recruitment week than in past years, when the fraternity recruited members from Lake Alice Field.

"This is really going to be advantageous for our rush, but I think that our brotherhood will really be what attracts them to Kappa Sigma," Jones said. "Sorority Row isn't exactly a disadvantageous location either."

Kappa Sigma Fraternity Student Housing Director Ryan Merkel exits the fraternity's recently built house on Saturday-afternoon. Fraternity members hope to move in sometime this week.
UF ADMINISTRATION
Audit reveals problems

By LIA GANOSSELLIS
Alligator Writer
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A state audit report recently revealed problems with UF's budgeting, spending, documentation and other financial issues.

The report, which reviews the operational activities of each Florida university every two years, was released Nov. 29 by the Florida Auditor General.

There were 21 problems at UF. The problems include UF's failure to document its authority to charge a fee to students studying abroad. UF responded that it does have the right to charge the fees because of regulations from the Board of Governors, the State University System's highest governing body, as well as Florida Statutes.

UF also lacked documentation that students in the Masters of Business Administration programs were not being overcharged in fees, and the money generated from the fees was not used to help finance any additional programs, the report states.

The report also noted problems with the proper documentation of UF's employee payroll. UF's chemistry department, in particular, needs improvement.

Ed Poppel, vice president of UF business affairs, said problems are bound to arise because of staff turnover and procedure changes.

Staff members often remain un-informed of updated processes and changed regulations, Poppel said.

"Not everyone gets the message," he said.

State auditors also found that UF needed to improve its efforts to collect money owed to the university through contracts and grants. However, UF has already reduced the amount of money owed to the university from about $16 million to about $10 million, UF's response states in the findings. That's not the only area in which UF has shown improvement.

"I would be worried if the auditors didn't find anything," Ed Poppel vice president of UF business affairs

State auditors found fewer problems in the past year than in 2005, when 25 findings were reported for the 2004-2005 budget year.

"Audits are done so you can make improvements," Poppel said. "I would be worried if the auditors didn't find anything." UF has already started addressing each issue, including the ongoing budgeting battle of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which was the first problem listed in the audit report.

CLAS has been in debt since 2006.

The university has already taken measures to prevent overspending by making enhanced monitoring tools, available to the staff, which allow colleges and departments to keep an eye on revenues and expenditures, UF's response states.

If expenditures exceed budget, each budget officer of that college or department is notified by e-mail so appropriate measures can be taken, the response states. Poppel said UF needs to focus on educating staff to prevent these problems.

"It's a very complex institution with ever-changing processes and procedures," Poppel said.

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A woman raises her hand in prayer in Immokalee, Fla., as a member of the "prayer team" from the First Assembly of God church in Gainesville places his hand on her head on Dec. 22.

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By DEBORAH SWERDLOW
Alligator Writer
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Move over, Facebook.

The Gator Nation Network, known as
GNN, is a professional networking site for UF
students, alumni and friends.

Although GNN was started in 2005, the
UF Alumni Association recently stepped up
its marketing efforts - especially to current
students - beginning with a Gators luggage
giveaway earlier this month.

Katie Marquis, director of membership
and marketing for the association, said almost
30,000 people are registered on GNN, making
it the second-largest school-networking site-
second only to the University of Michigan.

In some aspects, GNN is similar to
Facebook. Users can add friends, send mes-
sages and join groups, and the site keeps track
of birthdays, too.

But Marquis emphasized that professional
marketing, not socializing, is the primary
purpose of GNN.

Justin Rees, a UF graduate student who
joined GNN when it first started, said the site
became more helpful as he got older.

When Rees started looking for jobs in
September, he found the group for New York
Gators on GNN and e-mailed one of the mem-
bers.

"That just kind of blew me away," Rees
said.

Lauren O'Hara, a UF early childhood and
special education senior who is also in charge
of the UF Student Alumni Association, also
joined GNN when the site first became avail-
able, but she said she doesn't use it that often.

However, she said if she moves after
graduation it could be helpful, since there are
groups for every city.

Although she doesn't use the site much,
O'Hara said she encourages students to join
because of the benefits after graduation.

"When you graduate, you have access to
over 200,000 alumni and all of them are so
nice and just want to be your friends because
you went there," she said. "That Gator Nation
Network is the perfect way to be connected."

Judge left it open for the Board of Governors to refile its lawsuit

BOG, from page 1

Legislature and the board separately
called for the state's public universi-
ties to raise tuition.

The board approved a 5 percent
increase for each of Florida's 11 uni-
versities in September, and Florida
Gov. Charlie Crist approved the
Legislature's own 5 percent increase
in October.

"That doesn't seem to be good
for the universities," Edmonds said.

"It's hard for them to move forward
with some question about which
tuition increase is legitimate."

The schools will institute a 5
percent tuition hike in spring, which will
generate a total of about $9.5 million.
UF's share will be about $1.4 mil-

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Lauren O'Hara
UF early childhood and special education
senior

Within five hours, the member e-mailed
Rees with his phone number and told him
to call right away.

Although they never met, Rees said
they spoke for an hour and a half.

"That just kind of blew me away," Rees
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Friends and family members of Wright, Dahlem speak on their behalves

DAHLEM from page 1

Depending on the judge's discretion, Wright could walk out of court with his family that night and pay for his crime with community service. Or, he could spend up to 30 years in prison.

The next six hours would make clear that no matter how the judge ruled, both the Wright and Dahlem families would be impressed by Wright's actions for the rest of their lives.

Death: A Life Sentence for Dahlems

State prosecutor Geoffrey Fleck was first to present his side.

He introduced witness after witness, who shared fond memories of Dahlem.

Several themes emerged as Dahlem's friends and family spoke.

Dahlem was a true family man.

Nothing came before his wife, Sally, his daughter, Katie, and his son, Brandon.

Nothing.

Lt. Scott Meffen remembered that after his fellow GPD officers had nicknamed Dahlem "Spoon," he proudly introduced his newborn "Spoon." "As a team, we were sure to thank them for making the trip.

As Wright's supporters left, his parents hugged more than they spoke.

And most hugged more than they spoke.

The pain would be felt every year for the rest of their lives. The pain would be felt every day for the rest of their lives, she said, some days more sharply than others.

"Drive safely," she said.

"I wish there was some way I could take it all back.

Sentence Leaves No Winners

After more than six hours of painful testimony, Sieg was prepared to announce his decision.

Certain factors supported a light sentence, he said. Wright's actions were isolated, he was clearly remorseful, and he could use his influence toward a positive end.

Certain factors supported a heavy sentence.

Dahlem was a uniformed police officer on duty at the time of his death. Wright had made a series of bad choices, not least of which was his choice to consume an excessive amount of alcohol.

Sieg's decision, he warned, would leave 95 percent of the courtroom dissatisfied.

Matter-of-factly, Sieg looked out into the courtroom and announced that Wright would spend the next 10 years in a state prison.

Sally, Katie, and Brandon left the courtroom immediately. They later said they had hoped for a longer sentence, but felt he got what he deserved.

Wright removed his jacket. He loosened his tie, took one final look into his family's faces, and disappeared behind a courtroom door.

Most hugged more than they spoke.

As Wright's supporters left, his parents were sure to thank them for making the trip.

Mary Wright left her friends and family with two simple words.

"Drive safely," she said.

Austin Wright poses with his family during a Summer 2006 vacation to the Florida Keys. Photo courtesy of Alachua County Clerk of the Court

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Plea deal in UF student murder

By KATIE EMMETS
Alligator Writer
kemmets@alligator.org

A Gainesville man pled guilty last month to the second-degree murder of a UF student in 2004 after originally pleading not guilty.

On Dec. 18, Frankie Silvestri pled guilty to the second-degree murder of Premal Dinesh Dagly.

According to Silvestri's arrest report, police found Dagly's body beaten and stabbed near his partially burned car.

Silvestri, 26, was originally charged with first-degree murder, armed robbery and tampering with evidence.

According to his arrest report, his fingerprints were found in blood on the outside window of Dagly's car.

After his trial ended in a hung jury in October, the State Attorney's Office and Silvestri's attorneys reached a plea deal, allowing Silvestri to plead guilty to second-degree murder.

He faces up to 35 years in prison, according to official court documents.

A violation of parole hearing for Silvestri will be held on Feb. 19, according to a court clerk. A sentencing hearing has not yet been set.

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College of Engineering dean resigns after 6 years

By DEBORAH SWERDLOW
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Pramod Khargonekar, the six-year dean of UF's College of Engineering, announced his resignation Dec. 4.

In a phone interview, Khargonekar said he has not specified a date to step down, but it could be as late as August depending on how the search for a new dean progresses.

Khargonekar has led the college since 2001.

The college's associate dean for student affairs, Jonathan Earle, also retired in December, and Angela Lindner, an engineering professor, filled the position Jan. 1.

"I really want to confirm what I suspect most people do know here at the university -- that the College of Engineering very much values our undergraduate student population," Lindner said.

After stepping down as dean, Khargonekar said he intends to return to the UF faculty as a professor and researcher.

In his career as dean, Khargonekar hired 90 new faculty members and developed UF's biomedical engineering program and an institute for nanoscience and nanotechnology.

"It's a very satisfying thing for students to come back as deans and have all the successes that I've had," he said.

"I consider myself very, very lucky that all these really wonderful things have happened while I was dean."

UF Provost Janie Fouke said a search committee to fill Khargonekar's spot would be formed later this month.

Fouke said she's already received a few nominations from the engineering faculty, but that's as far as the search has gone.

She said she expects the search to take about a year or less because of the position's high desirability.

"It's going to be a hard job to fill — hard shoes to fill," Fouke said.

Student Democrats, Republicans respond to caucuses

Both groups focused on Florida

By KATIE SANDERS
Alligator Writer
ksanders@alligator.org

The victories of Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., and former Gov. Mike Huckabee, R-Ark., in Friday's Iowa caucuses have earned support from some UF student political organizations on campus.

The Iowa caucuses jump-started the presidential nominating process for the race to the Oval Office, ending with the national election in November.

UF College Republicans Chairman Ben Grove, a UF political science senior, said Huckabee's first win, where he earned 34 percent of the Republican vote, came "out of nowhere."

"I think Huckabee really had an exuberant personality and could relate to the common man as the good ol' man from Arkansas," Grove said.

He said he does not know what the former Arkansas governor's victory in Iowa means for the rest of the primary season.

"While it's important, I think honestly the biggest primary is going to be on January 29," he said, referring to Florida's primary.

The College Republicans and the College Democrats are planning to educate students about the candidates on the Reitz Union Colonnade and Turlington Plaza all month.

"Our voters just really don't know which direction we want to go," he said. "It's a great opportunity for us because we have so much variety and choice."

UF College Democrats want Floridians to demonstrate the "same zeal for the political process" at the Florida primary as Iowans, the group wrote in a news release.

All of the major Democratic candidates have boycotted Florida's primary election because the national party deemed the primary's date too early, which has given the Republican candidates a head start to campaign.

"It's going to be a hard job to fill, but that's as far as the search has gone."

Fouke said she's already received a few nominations from the engineering faculty, but that's as far as the search has gone.

She said she expects the search to take about a year or less because of the position's high desirability.

"It's going to be a hard job to fill — hard shoes to fill," Fouke said.

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1. Billie Jean King (1961). 2. Joe Torre and Mike Jostenes. 3. Rich Garnett completed 21 consecutive passes for Oakland Raiders on December 11, 2005. 4. David Dion Craig's third double in 2006. 5. When was the last men's basketball NCAA Tournament final decision by 20 or more points? 6. Name the last NASCAR driver before Jamie Johnson in 2007 to have 10 or more victories in one season. 7. How many Grand Slam tennis singles titles did Billie Jean King win in her career? Answers:
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No. 15 Vanderbilt (15-0)

**BEST WIN:** Back-to-back home wins over Georgia Tech (92-79) and Wake Forest (83-80).
**WORST LOSS:** None so far.
**KEY PLAYER:** G/F Shan Foster 21.1 ppg, 5.1 rpg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** Vanderbilt's early success can be chalked up to a soft schedule. Aside from South Alabama and perhaps Valparaiso, it's debatable if the Commodores have played a single team bound for the NCAA tournament. Regardless, Vanderbilt has found a way to win games and remains one of the nation's six undefeated teams.

No. 9 Tennessee (12-1)

**BEST WIN:** Road wins against No. 24 Xavier (82-75) and Gonzaga (82-72).
**WORST LOSS:** At Texas (97-78).
**KEY PLAYER:** G Chris Lofton 14.5 ppg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** After blowing a 20-point lead in an 85-84 loss to Ohio State in last year's Sweet Sixteen, the Vols return the core of their squad, including lead man Chris Lofton. Tennessee is the league's deepest and most talented squad since 1979.

Georgia (8-4)

**BEST WIN:** Wake Forest (72-50).
**WORST LOSSES:** Back-to-back losses to East Tennessee State (76-58) and Tulane (70-69).
**KEY PLAYER:** G Billy Humphrey 13.4 ppg, 4.0 rpg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** The Bulldogs are facing hard times these days, as the team has been decimated by suspensions and off-the-court problems. Takais Brown and Mike Mercer, Georgia's top two scorers from last season, have been kicked off the team leaving the Bulldogs little chance of doing any damage this season.

South Carolina (8-6)

**BEST WIN:** At Providence (68-67).
**WORST LOSS:** Home loss to North Carolina-Ashville (61-58).
**KEY PLAYER:** G Devan Downey 18.6 ppg, 5.4 apg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** The Gamecocks have dealt with a tough schedule early on, including road games at USC and No. 18 Clemson. South Carolina, with only one senior and two transfers, is young and needs significant time to gel before making any run in the SEC.

Kentucky (6-7)

**BEST WIN:** NONE.
**WORST LOSS:** Home loss to Gardner-Webb (84-68).
**KEY PLAYER:** F Patrick Patterson 16.8 ppg, 8.1 rpg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** Injuries to Derrick Jasper and Jodie Meeks haven't helped a team that has Kentucky faithful writhing in their seats. Home losses to Gardner-Webb and San Diego sum up a dreadful start to the Billy Gillespie era. If Kentucky doesn't get healthy and improve quickly, the Wildcats are sure to suffer from the wrong type of March Madness.

Florida (13-2)

**BEST WIN:** Rutgers (88-63).
**WORST LOSSES:** Lopsided losses to Florida State (65-51) and Ohio State (62-49).
**KEY PLAYER:** C Marreese Speights 14.5 ppg, 7.6 rpg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** The Gators boast a talented and promising freshman class, but inconsistency on the inside and from beyond the arc have the Gators struggling to find themselves. Until the Gators mature and prove they can beat a quality opponent, it's hard to imagine this group playing past the first weekend.

Elite Eight

South Carolina (86)

**BEST WIN:** At Providence (68-67).
**WORST LOSS:** Home loss to North Carolina-Asheville (61-58).
**KEY PLAYER:** G Devan Downey 18.6 ppg, 5.4 apg.
**WHERE THEY'LL FINISH:** The Gamecocks have dealt with a tough schedule early on, including road games at USC and No. 18 Clemson. South Carolina, with only one senior and two transfers, is young and needs significant time to gel before making any run in the SEC.

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UF loses top in-state defensive back prospect to LSU

**Recruit**, from page 35

In the game, the most prestigious among high school all-star games, Patchan said UF met all the criteria he felt were important for his school of choice. The priority being talented teammates to compete against in practice.

"That was my number one thing that we can't let this slip away," he said. "I felt like there was great talent on both sides of the ball at Florida. I think this was the best decision I could have made for myself." He was also spurred by the impacts of freshmen linemen Torrey Davis — who played alongside Patchan at Armwood — and Mike and Maurice Pouncey for this season for the Gators.

"It's encouraging," he said. "It's a very young team, and I'm going to get my shot to play early just like everybody else is. We'll see where I go from there." Patchan didn't have much time for a post- announcement celebration. He graduated from high school early and will show up for classes in Gainesville on Monday.

Urban Meyer hoped that defensive back Patrick Johnson would make the trip with Patchan, but the nation's No. 1 corner chose LSU instead.

Johnson — from Pompano Beach Elly High— told NBC that he felt comfortable with Tigers coach Les Miles, leading him to Baton Rouge instead of UF or FSU, his other two finalists.

"That kid has basically committed everywhere he's been, but it's always surprising when a kid leaves the state of Florida," Newberg said.

Even without Johnson, UF should bring in a talented crop of defensive backs. Two of the highest-rated safeties — Will Hill and Dee Finley — along with four-star Pahokee High corner Janoris Jenkins have pledged to join the Gators for next season.

All three played in Saturday's Under Armour All-America High School Football Game and turned in solid performances, with Hill making an interception near the end of the first half.

"That was my number one thing — the talent level. I felt like there was great talent on both sides of the ball," said Matt Patchan, Seffner Armwood lineman.

Johnson's recruitment was a wild one as he was rumored to have committed to several schools throughout the process. Losing Johnson an early commitment to Miami.

"That kid basically committed everywhere he's been, but it's always surprising when a kid leaves the state of Florida," Newberg said.

Among the five-star players that still list UF as possible destinations are running backs Darrel Scott and Jamie Harper, receivers Julio Jones and Rodrick Brown, quarterback Terrelle Pryor, defensive tackle Omar Hunter, and cornerbacks Taj Bryant and Brandon Harazin.

Verbal commitments are non-binding until a national letter of intent is signed on or after Feb. 6.

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**Whoops**, from page 35

said. "She's the best free-throw shooter in the SEC. If she can continually get fouled and go 10-for-10, we're going to have some success."

The Gators opened the game with a dominant 13-1 run, holding the Owls without a field goal until the 13:19 mark of the first half.

"My biggest fear tonight was not that they were prepared, but whether or not we would start strong," Gardner said. "I feel like it was important for us being on the road. Even though we didn't bring it up, they might have that in the back of our minds, that we can't let this slip away."

Temple would claw their way back into the game, scoring the last 5 points of the first half to cut the lead to 11. While UF committed only 14 turnovers on the night, there was a stretch in the second half where Temple scored 6 straight points and seemed to gain momentum with their full-court press. It was the moment where the Gators had crumbled in the past on the road, allowing the home team to keep gaining control and cutting down the lead.

Saturday was different, however, as Gardner called a timeout and reminded her team that they were winning. She said she saw a different look in the team's eyes this time around, a confidence that hadn't been there in the past.

"I don't remember saying we are still in control," Gardner said. "I told them play not to lose. We had had leads in the past and tried to just hang on. I said let's keep attacking." The Gators stayed aggressive and held off the Owls' charge by trading baskets.

Brooks hit a 3-pointer with 3:25 remaining to put UF up by 17, which seemed to close the door.

"We faced adversity," said senior guard Deppie Bowden, who had 12 points on 5-for-9 shooting. "When they made a run, we came back and answered." Brooks said the difference compared to the past three road losses was desire.

"We just wanted it more," Brooks said. "We went out and played hard, for Coach Butler. We just played our A-game."

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**Gardner, Gators survive Owls' second-half surge**, from page 35

UF is still a half step below the elite. But they're already beating high-level opponents. Losing Johnson was big for the Gators, with the most prestigious among high school all-star games.

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**Steelye**, from page 35

time, that's serious progress. UF hasn't proven much yet, but the Gators are winners of seven straight and if they had a streak like last season Peck may still be here. Going into conference play last season UF was 6-9; this season it's 11-4.

• Did you know there's still a title contender here?

If you thought Joakim Noah was crazy, I suggest you go watch this gymnastics squad.

Imagine Noah on a sugar rush, and that gives you an idea of what the team's warm-ups look like. They're just as talented as the Bulls were, too. UF's No. 2 presession team and should've won it all last year. This year that they've won't be taken out. And they just added UCLA transfer Maranda Smith, a two- time junior Olympic champion.

• How do you respond to the best season in school history?

That's what softball coach Tim Walton is about to find out. Last season, Walton proved that he was the right hire three years ago and took the Gators within one game of the College World Series. UF lost slugger Melissa Zick and senior pitcher Stacey Sanders, but they still have hackey-sack wiz Stacey Nelson. The SEC is as tough in softball as it is in football, and the Gators are still a half step below the elite. But that gap is closing, and — depending on how much it closes — this team could make a serious national run.

Quick hits:

In case you just want to see a beatdown by a UF squad, go check out a women's tennis match. They dominate nearly every season. The men aren't too shabby, either... Put the women's tennis team senior class in that same category. I covered these ladies their freshman years, and they were already beating high-level swimmers. I imagine you'll be hearing Caroline Burckle's name at the Olympics this summer.

UF's senior class has five All-Americans... Ever heard of Ryan Lochte? You know, one of the best swimmers in the world who is still training in Gainesville for the Olympics? Well, freshman Matt Norton might be even better in a few years. And he was coached by Lochte's dad in high school... Talking about great athletes, junior golfer Billy Horschel is one of the best around... The women's golf team was a title contender, until Sandra Cog left. That's like taking Tebow from the Gators.

---

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UF WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Butler misses team's road win

By PHIL KEGLER
Alligator Staff Writer
pkegler@alligator.org

PHILADELPHIA — Amanda Butler calls her Nema.
Viola Draper is her formal name, and she is the woman the UF coach credits for much of her upbringing.
Draper, in her late 90s, had been in the hospital the past few days, so

last week Butler had changed her recruiting schedule for today and tomorrow so she could go visit her after the team's game at Temple Saturday afternoon.

But when Butler's father called her Friday afternoon and told her that she needed to come home sooner, she did just that for the woman she cares so much about.

She took a 10 p.m. flight from Philadelphia to Nashville on her way to her hometown of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., to spend Draper's last days with her.

Her day job as coach for the UF women's basketball team would be put on hold.

The team was notified late Friday night by the assistant coaches, just before a team meal.

Assistant coach Susie Gardner filled in for Butler in Philadelphia Saturday and will assume her responsibilities until she returns.

No timetable has been set, but it's doubtful she will return before Wednesday.

For Gardner, the chance to bring home a win Saturday, the team's first in four games on the road, meant a lot, especially in Butler's absence.

And she did, as the Gators defeated Temple 68-54.

"One, I know how much she loves Nema, and two, how much she loves coaching this team," Gardner said.

"In a way I didn't want to let her down," Senior guard and co-captain Depree Bowden made a point of addressing the team herself.

"I just told them that we've got to play hard for her and get this win," Bowden said.

Gardner credits the work of fellow coaches for the team's success.

Assistant coach Brenda Mock Kirkpatrick was responsible for scouting the Owls and stayed up all night with Gardner to prepare her for Saturday's game.

"She prepared me exceptionally well last night and then again this morning just so I could have it in my mind," Gardner said. "(Assistant coach) David (Lowery) and those guys on the bench were feeding me (during the game)."

This wasn't just another game, or another chance to vanquish past road disappointments playing away from home.

It was a chance for the team to give back to the coach who works so hard for them.

"I think that in their hearts and in their heads, we wanted to win this game for Amanda," Gardner said.

The UF men's and women's swimming and diving teams used a combined 14 first-place finishes and 5 NCAA provisional qualifying times over the weekend to each pick up wins against Indian River Community College, while the No. 5 men also defeated No. 12 Purdue twice and the No. 7 women topped Arkansas at the O'Connell Center.

The men defeated Arkansas 114-86 and IRCC 136-54 Saturday.

The men defeated Purdue 137-125 Friday and 106-97 Saturday, while also topping IRCC 140-99 Saturday.

"We were better (Saturday) than (on Friday)," Coach Gregg Troy said. "We've been going through some training cycles, so everyone was a little tired, but we got honest efforts from everyone.

Cody Kaufman and Bradley Ally were real consistent and we got a solid effort both days from Shaune Fraser. On the women's side, Gemma Spofoirth looked good and Samantha Vanderbilt had a lot of consistency."

A third-place finish in the 500 and 1,000-yard freestyle events highlighted Kaufman's performance.

Fraser was one of the most consistent swimmers for the Gators, swimming his way to three first-place finishes while Ally added another two.

Spofoirth added a win of her own in the 200-yard backstroke, and Vanderbilt turned in a second-place finish in the 100-yard freestyle.

UF divers traveled to Athens, Ga. to compete in the Georgia Diving Invitational over the weekend.

The Gators were led by Monica Dodson, who dove to a fourth-place finish with a total of 235.75 points.

She was followed by Sarah Ellerby and Jennifer Funch, who finished right behind Dodson in fifth and sixth place with 223.70 and 211.60, respectively.

The Gators will be in action next on Jan. 12, when the swimming and diving teams host LSU at 2 p.m. in the O'Connell Center.

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Gators head coach Amanda Butler traveled to her hometown in Tennessee to visit her sick grandmother. The trip caused her to miss her team's 68-54 win against Temple.
Clemens denies drug use in ‘60 Minutes’ interview

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Ask About Our Specials
Gators land five-star lineman prospect

**MATT PATCHAN CHOSE UF OVER MIAMI.**

By MIKE MCCALL
Alligator Staff Writer
mcall@alligator.org

UF’s 2008 recruiting class got a big boost Saturday with the verbal commitment of Matt Patchan.

Patchan, a 6-foot-7, 265-pounder from Seffner Armwood High, is the No. 4 offensive tackle in the country according to Scout.com.

The five-star prospect is just the second offensive lineman to commit to the Gators this year.

“It’s huge because, obviously, the Gators need help on both lines of scrimmage,” Scout.com recruiting analyst Jamie Newberg said. “He’s a high-motor, high-energy kid. He’s tenacious, nasty and kind of old school.

“As a tackle, I think he has as much talent as anybody in the country.”

Patchan played both offense and defense in high school, but is expected to perform as a blocker for the Gators.

He chose UF over Miami, where his father, also named Matt, was an offensive lineman from 1984-87 under Coach Jimmy Johnson.

“My dad took it well,” Patchan said. “He backs me 100 percent.

**WOMEN’S BASKETBALL**

**UF conquers road demons in final tune-up**

By PHIL KEGLER
Alligator Staff Writer
pkegler@alligator.org

PHILADELPHIA — The UF women’s basketball team had been here before.

The Gators had played well on the road in spurts and always let the victory slip through their fingers.

This time, with Temple gaining momentum and looking to erase a 16-point deficit early in the second half, UF held off the Owls for a 68-54 victory in its fifth nonconference game Saturday afternoon.

The Gators, 11-4 and winners of seven straight, gained plenty of confidence as they head into their Southeastern Conference opener Thursday, having taken the first step to quieting notions that they can’t achieve success on the road.

They did it without head coach Amanda Butler, who flew to her hometown of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., late Friday night to be with her sick grandmother.

Assistant coach Susie Gardner assumed the head coaching responsibilities in Butler’s absence, and she tried to keep past failures on the road out of the players’ thoughts.

“We tried to not make that a big deal for our players obviously,” she said. “We looked at it more as keeping our winning streak healthy and then going into SEC play with momentum, which I think we did.”

But the Gators did have guard Sha Brooks, the Owls (7-9) never found much of an answer for her.

“Make sure (Dawn Staley) knows who Sha Brooks is.”

**Susie Gardner**

UF assistant coach to guard Sha Brooks

The junior took the message to heart, showing glimpses of her play last season when she averaged more than 15 points per game on her way to being named to the All-SEC second team.

Brooks averaged just 10.1 points per game coming into Saturday’s game and had scored less than 5 points in three contests this season, including the previous two.

“It was good to see Sha looking more confident, more like Sha, and attacking,” Gardner said.

**SEE WHOOPS, PAGE 31**
There is no bond stronger than the one formed when you become a member of The Gator Nation. In every corner of the globe, Gators accomplish remarkable feats with innovative thinking and inspired collaboration. The Gator Nation knows no boundaries.

So welcome back to Gainesville and the University of Florida ... the foundation for The Gator Nation!