Here's what's brewing around campus . . .

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- Web ethics cause concern p. 4
- Questions of office p. 3
Oasis kids head to Fla. Keys

By Doug White
Nest co-editor

All year long the students, parents and staff of the Oasis Program have held car washes, bake sales and rummage sales in an effort to raise money for their program.

Thanks to their efforts, eleven students and one parent are headed for the Florida Keys for an educational research camping excursion.

“Debbie Rice is thrilled. The interim director of Oasis, the on-campus dropout prevention program for eighth-graders, said she’s glad the students will get to see the fruits of their labor.

“They’ve worked hard for this,” Rice said. “It’s the students, parents and staff really work together.”

The students will conduct coral reef research and identify the animal and marine life they encounter on the five-day trip. The students are also required to keep a journal about their experiences.

Rice said the trip gives the students an opportunity to challenge their fears in a comfortable group setting, while enabling them to gain both academic and life skills.

“The challenges lead the students to go beyond their comfort level,” Rice said.

“The trip provides a wonderful opportunity for the students to experience the ecology and the marine habitats themselves, rather than just reading about it in their textbooks.”

In past years, Oasis has taken students on trips to Key Largo, the Bahamas, and Washington, DC.

This year’s trip is being financed with the help of the student fundraisers, and the program’s annual Bowl-A-Thon, which raised $1,000. The students leave for the Keys in their brand new school bus on April 24 and return April 29.

“It’s a real privilege to be able to do this,” Rice said. “Most of the students have never been to the Keys or gone on an educational trip with their teachers.”

Graduating? Here’s info you need

JFK exhibit extended at FIM

By Cary Wimer
Nest contributor

If you haven’t had the opportunity to visit the Florida International Museum’s JFK exhibit, don’t worry because the museum plans to make the Kennedy galleries permanent part of its permanent collection.

Accordingly, the exhibit was scheduled to run from Nov. 12, 1999 through May 29, 2000. With previous shows, Treasures of the Czars, Splendors of Ancient Egypt, Alexander the Great, Titanic and Empires of Mystery, artifacts had to be borrowed from different sources and returned.

Now, for the first time, the museum has acquired a collection of its own through a 30-year lease.

According Wayne Atherholt, director of marketing and public relations, the most expensive part of hosting an exhibit is tearing down and rebuilding the galleries. “The museum is literally bulldozed on the inside. The floor comes up and the walls come down,” Atherholt said.

Now, acquiring the artifacts will be the most expensive part of putting together an exhibit. The museum will have some in that area, though. In a statement released April 17, the museum announced its affiliation with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

According to Wendy Crowder, a museum employee, the museum will be given space in the museum and will loan out various artifacts.

For the JFK exhibit, the majority of the objects on display were acquired through Robert White, a collector of Kennedy memorabilia. As a youngster, fascinated with JFK, White wrote to Evelyn Lincoln, JFK’s secretary, in search of small mementos. Lincoln was so impressed with his letter that she began sending him various souvenirs. White, continued to collect Kennedy memorabilia over the years until his childhood fixation became a permanent display for everyone to enjoy.

Since it opened in November, the exhibit has received mixed reviews. Dr. Ray Arsenault, a history professor at USF, said “although the collection was enjoyable and worth seeing, it didn’t answer the big questions and needed more context.”

One item in the collection that Arsenault felt deserved more explanation was the correspondence between a reporter, Inga Arvads, and JFK during World War II. According to Arsenault, Arvads was an alleged spy and could have ruined JFK’s political career.

Arsenault also said the museum should have focused more on the historical approach and less on Kennedy as a celebrity. For example, personal articles like teetowel clippers, wallets and Harvard address books don’t necessarily appeal to a historian like Arsenault, but they might be what a Kennedy fan would appreciate.

The museum is located at 100 Second Street North in downtown St. Petersburg and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. with no one admitted after 5 p.m. Tickets cost $13.95 for adults, $12.95 for seniors, $7.95 for college students, $5.95 for children 6-18 and free for children under 6. For more information call (727) 821-1448.

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NO FEE FOR ADVERTISING
Dean's aide balances politics, job

By Therese Mattioli
Nest contributor

Shortly after being hired in October 1999, Charles Justice, special assistant to USF St. Petersburg campus dean Bill Heller, followed the chain of command and notified the university of his desire to run for a seat in the Florida House of Representatives.

In a letter dated Dec. 17, 1999, USF Vice Provost Tennyson Wright responded to Justice's formal notification "Based on a discussion with Dean Bill Heller,"

"If you are following the rules, following policy, and it isn't interfering with your job, why prohibit someone from serving public office?"

— USF employee Charles Justice on his political candidacy

Wright noted, "It appears as if a work schedule can be developed that will allow you to maintain employment with the university while seeking public office..."

Wright's letter continued, "...you need to take all reasonable steps to avoid conveying the impression that you are an agent or representative of the University and avoid even the appearance of a conflict in this regard. It will be important to ensure that no campaign activities are conducted using university resources..." His correspondence to Justice concluded with, "Best wishes for a successful campaign."

Fast-forward to April 2000. On the heels of new university president Judy Genshaft's arrival, David Shern, dean of USF's Louise de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, fired employee Mary Brennan because she is running for public office. Specifically, she is a Democrat running for public office. So is Charles Justice. But, Justice isn't alone. Larry McLaughlin another Democrat, also has a history of political involvement during his tenure with the university, currently serving as director of program development for Educational Outreach. One may question why Brennan was let go, while Justice and McLaughlin stay on, but Brennan's case is not the issue. The issue is the university's policy on political activism on the part of its employees. The issue is the impression the university is making on the great political wheel turning up in Tallahassee.

Heller believes the university should encourage its employees to participate in the political process. "We should make sure there are no conflicts, that there is no use of the university as a pulpit, but this ought to be a place that should encourage community service and public office."

He said there are rules and regulations within university policy that protect the individual and the university, non-prohibitive policies, which are all designed to let people know they can't use their job as a platform.

"Somebody has to be involved in government," Heller said. "If you have someone who seems to be acceptable, who is interested, who fulfills a political purpose, it isn't inappropriate."

As for Brennan's situation, Heller believes that "people may have overreacted. There is no evidence that she was promoting herself through her job, and anyone who really knows her knows she wouldn't." Stepping into Justice's near closet-sized office, one sees the normal accouterments of university administration. Stacks of USF correspondence and paperwork, a bookcase shelved with policy manuals and three-ring, labeled binders. There is not so much as a campaign sticker, a business card, anything, that reflects Justice's "other" life as a candidate.

His "day" job as assistant to the dean, and his "nights and weekends" job as political candidate are separated with surgical precision. He carries a cell phone, his own cell phone, so he can make candidate-related calls on his lunch hour. He ticks off a list of campaign meetings and appointments scheduled for after 6 p.m.

With a chuckle, he speaks of walking the community door-to-door on Saturdays. Noticeably absent from the conversation is any reference to his politics, or his agenda as a candidate.

"On Sunday, after church, Kathy (his wife) and I, regroup," he said. "It's our big organization day. We plan for the next week. It's like living a second life. We need to regroup," he said. "It's a wonderful job" for FMHI since coming to USF in March 1999. But under university policy, Brennan an hourly employee earning $54,000 annually could be dismissed at any time, even without cause.

Employees under contract can run for office without giving up their USF jobs so long as the administrative sees no conflict between the candidacy and the university's interests. "If there is a conflict, they too, are subject to dismissal."

Among those who expressed concern about Brennan's candidacy was House Rep. Leslie Waters, a Republican who won the seat from Brennan in 1998. Brennan was quoted in a March 24 St. Petersburg Times article saying that the pressure by Republican lawmakers fueled her ouster. Shern told Brennan the night he fired her that her candidacy "put the house in a compromising position because (she was) running against a sitting member of the Legislature."

Shern replied in the same article that his recollection and Brennan's recollection of the conversation were "inconsistent."

In the wake of Brennan's dismissal, Democratic office seeker Charles Justice, an assistant to USF St. Petersburg Dean Bill Heller, has come under scrutiny. (Please see accompanying story.)

Fired candidate might sue USF

By Krista Reiner
Nest co-editor

Former Florida House member Mary Brennan knows what it's like to be in a political pinch. But she thought she could separate her political life from her work at USF. She couldn't. She was USF officials.

Brennan left her USF position on April 4 and is considering legal action against the university on grounds she was terminated solely for her political ambitions. Brennan, a Democratic candidate hoping to reclaim her house seat in Pinellas County, 51, wanted to run for office while keeping her job as director of community development at USF's Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, a FMHI department of aging and mental health.

But reportedly after getting base from Republican lawmakers in Tallahassee, her former boss, FMHI's dean David Shern, fired Brennan March 21. Press reports said USF officials feared Brennan's candidacy might cast a partisan light on FMHI and USF.

Shern was quoted as saying that Brennan did "a wonderful job" for FMHI since coming to USF in March 1999. But under university policy, Brennan an hourly employee earning $54,000 annually could be dismissed at any time, even without cause.

Employees under contract can run for office without giving up their USF jobs so long as the administrative sees no conflict between the candidacy and the university's interests. "If there is a conflict, they too, are subject to dismissal."

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In the wake of Brennan's dismissal, Democratic office seeker Charles Justice, an assistant to USF St. Petersburg Dean Bill Heller, has come under scrutiny. (Please see accompanying story.)

Brennan has been involved with the university for years both as a student and an employee. He and Heller got to know each other when Justice worked as an assistant in the university advancement office while pursuing an undergraduate degree.

The two remained friends after Justice left USF to work for Lars Hafner, another public official who also enjoys a career in education. While in office, Hafner instructed at St. Petersburg Junior College. Justice joined Heller's staff in October, filling a vacated grant-funded position that ties the university with public schools.

Justice continued on page 4

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(The opposite USF St. Pete campus)
Librarians question Web filtering

By Chris Curry
Nest staff writer

The semester-long Cole Ethics Lecture Series wrapped up April 17 with a discussion of a contemporary dilemma, Internet ethics.

Cathy Arsenault, acting director of the USF St. Petersburg Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, and a panel of three visiting librarians addressed an audience of students, faculty and community members at the Campus Activities Center on the controversial practice of Internet filtering. Filtering is a practice in which software is installed in computers at schools and libraries in order to restrict or deny access to pornographic or violent web sites.

Charles Harmon, the ethics chairman for the American Library Association, told the audience that while the growing amount of hate speech, sexually explicit material and violent content available on the Internet signals a disturbing trend, the ALA opposes filtering as an unconstitutional act of censorship. Harmon said that most librarians fight censorship because it obstructs the free flow of ideas and a patron's right to read in a library.

"The First Amendment is something that must be defended every day," Harmon said, "and that defense is not always easy."

Dr. Lawrence Miller, chairman of the intellectual freedom committee for the

Justice

continued from page 3

For $35,000 a year, Justice coordinates research on dropout prevention which Heller presents at the Southeastern Regional Vision in Education conference each year. He also "represents" Heller at meetings if the dean is tied up with other obligations. "With my history as a legislative aide, I'm comfortable around the public, being in the community," Justice said.

Justice isn't concerned about mixing his university obligations with his dreams for public office.

"The legislature is technically a part-time position. Legislators make about $25,000 a year, but rarely do you see a person who does it without other work. It comes down to spending two months in Tallahassee (April and May), and occasionally weekends. It really comes down to scheduling, using flex time, taking time off, just keeping open communication between yourself and your boss."

Dr. Darryl Paulson, professor of government, has different ideas of what it means when university employees run for political office. In Paulson's opinion, regardless of whether it is intentional or not, the fact that all of the candidates who run are university employees shows a sensitivity topropriety, to creating the appearance of propriety. Since 1994, Florida's Cole Ethics Lecture Series, also spoke out in opposition to filtering as an act of censorship which threatens intellectual freedom.

But the program's third panelist, Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library Director Joe Stites offered a different perspective on the filtering issue. He said that while he opposes censorship, filtering seems to be the only current solution to keep children from being exposed to the vast amount of obscene and racy material on the Internet. All schools in Hillsborough County and every library except the downtown branch currently use the WebSense filter.

Prior to the lecture, Harmon joined USF St. Petersburg faculty, staff and students for the "Hidden Curriculum" luncheon held in Davis 130. Mass communications professor Jay Black, coordinator of the Program for Ethics in Education and Community, described the luncheon as an opportunity for the campus community to discuss issues that affect them all, but are rarely discussed.

The Internet was also the subject at the afternoon luncheon, which drew a crowd of more than 40 faculty and staff and two students. But this discussion focused on the well-documented problem of college students using the Web to purchase term papers and plagiarize materials.

"We're going to show the group a series of slides highlighting some of the more popular sites available on the Internet. "This one is particularly captivating," Arsenault said of the infamous chatehouse.com. "It even has a link to how to cheat on an exam," she said.

"The First Amendment is something that must be defended every day. And that defense is not always easy."

—Charles Harmon, ethics chair for the American Library Association on Internet filtering

After the presentation, faculty members voiced their concerns and in a few cases their frustrations over the problem of plagiarism on the Internet. One problem raised in the discussion was that some students go through four years of college and never learn the proper way to cite sources in a term paper.

"Most people don't know how to reference and when you don't know how to reference you plagiarize," said management professor Scott Geiger. "I had a senior who came to me and said, 'If we quote someone do we have to put it in quotes in the paper?'"

Black said the easy access to term papers on the Internet and the resolve of faculty members to crack down on students who cheat has created an unfortunate situation where professors and students are now adversaries.

"I have a radical suggestion," Black said. "Why don't we create an environment where there's very little inclination to cheat?" Black said one way to accomplish this would be to instill a sense of responsibility in students.

Other faculty added that it was past time to address high-tech plagiarism as a campus problem. "Our preferred method of dealing with these things has been not to deal with them," said business professor Ellen Hufnagel.

"I think there are potential solutions for the problem were offered. Upon Hufnagel's suggestion, Black circulated a sign-up sheet for a committee on plagiarism comprised of faculty and staff. There was talk of the library staff offering increased instruction on the proper way to cite sources from the Internet.

"I prefer it as a campus project that's being led up to this issue," Dr. Stephen Rich, said this would be part of the curriculum for next fall's incoming freshmen.

Rich also said that the creation of an honor code might help. "An honor code won't cure the problem, but it will show people what values a university community should honor, and it is particularly beguiling," Arsenault said of papers on the Internet and the resolve of faculty members to crack down on students who cheat has created an unfortunate situation where professors and students are now adversaries.

"I have a radical suggestion," Black said. "Why don't we create an environment where there's very little inclination to cheat?" Black said one way to accomplish this would be to instill a sense of responsibility in students.

Another suggestion was to circulate a handout of the school's policy on what constitutes academic dishonesty to every student, an action many universities have already taken. "Maybe there's one already out there we can just copy," said history professor and science coordinator David Carr.

Asked for his opinion on the forum, Harmon said he thought many good points were raised, especially the need to teach students how to cite Internet materials properly.

Both the luncheon and the lecture series were presented by the campus' ethics task force and the Program for Ethics in Education and Community at USF St. Petersburg, which filled the void left when the University of South Florida's Ethics Center moved to the Tampa campus last fall.

The Ethics Center was founded as a grant from former St. Petersburg Mayor Ed Cole, which established an endowed chair in ethics held by Ethics Center director and USF philosophy department chairman Peter French. French left that chair when the Ethics Center moved to Tampa and money that went toward his salary funded the Cole Ethics Lectures.

"There's kind of an irony there," Black said, "because when the Ethics Center was here we had trouble getting money and now that it leaves we have an operating budget."

Black rated the first semester of the Cole Lectures series a success in terms of attendance and audience participation. When the Cole Lectures resume next spring, Black plans on tying the series into an ethics course where students attend the programs and produce papers on the various topics covered.
Class indulges the artists within

By Therese Mattioli
Nest contributor

Taking an art class was a "pig" accomplishment for Michele Caraway, a 26-year-old, finance major at USF St. Petersburg. "I'm not very creative," said Caraway, as she applies finishing touches to a very pink paper-mache pig she has been working on for the last two classes. The idea for the pig, she admits, was inspired by one of her finance-major friends who suggested she make a piggy bank. "I'm going to give it to one of my nephews," she said, eyeing her project with a bemused grin, adding, "if he'll take it."

The three-credit class, Art For the Child, has been offered at USF every semester since 1991. The instructor, Tom Oberly, is an artist who has been teaching art classes at USF since 1981. "Primarily," said Oberly, "this is a class on how to teach elementary education teachers how to teach art, but lately I've seen a lot of business majors as well. I think they enjoy the release."

His students work in a variety of mediums from simple ceramics, which are fired in a kiln on-site, to paper-mache to painting to drawing. They are required to produce 10 to 15 projects over the course of the semester. Each project takes roughly one class period to complete.

Over the years Oberly has seen it all. "I've taught students who are taking their first art class since elementary school to people who taught art at the Ringling school in Sarasota. One year a student made a full-sized float for the Strawberry Festival out of paper-mache. Then there was the 10-ft. paper-mache dinosaur, a full-sized paper-mache lion, and even a paper-mache bicycle."

The classroom is a reflection of student creativity. There are no chalkboards, no off-kilter rows of uncomfortable-looking plastic chairs with fake-wood veneered desktops. Artwork dangles from the ceiling, stands in the corners, and lines the walls like 3-D wallpaper. Students sit in groups of three or four, clustered together amidst paintbrushes, jars of paint, half-finished projects and art books. Conversation is light and familiar. As they work students share ideas, and seem to share their lives with each other as they casually reach for a set of colored pencils, or a glue-pot. Artistic ability is discussed with a liberal self-debasement, and a suggestion of pride. No one, their tone implies, is trying to recreate the Mona Lisa.

"We get to express ourselves with certain projects," said 21-year-old elementary education major, Todd McCarthy. This is hang it up with a little card that reads, 'Donate to Danielle's college fund'. Hey, who knows, it might work," she adds with a laugh.

Art For the Child isn't a course on art appreciation or art theory. Students don't spend much time discussing form or style, unless it applies to their personal artwork. Oberly is supportive, knowledgeable, and interested in getting the students in touch with their creative process. He is helping them along on their semester-long journey of getting in touch with the artist within.

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To work or not to work

By Tiger Edwards
Harvard Crimson (Harvard U.)
(U-WIRE) CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—It's not every day that your professor laughs at you. But as you prove a point about gender inequality, your professor asked all the guys in your class whether anyone would consider staying home to raise the kids. No one raised his hand.

The professor then added, “What about any female students?” Again, no response — until I slowly raised my hand. The professor caught sight of me and could not stop laughing. I looked up, a bit shocked, a bit dismayed. First, my professor is a woman herself. Next, I thought educated men and women in a psychology course would translate their knowledge that the early years of every child’s life are a critical time to promote development into a decision to spend those years with them.

The entire experience, minus the laughter, echoes a conversation I’ve had several times, particularly with female friends, as we approach graduation. It is commonly thought to find women (or men) at Harvard who want to stay home to raise the kids. No one raised his hand.

I hope I will be able to make the choice to be at home while my children grow up. Many mothers and fathers struggle with long hours at multiple jobs in insufficient hours to provide homes for their families and do not have the luxury of deciding to stay home with their children. Conversely, some women and men do not want to stay home with their families full or part time — also a valid choice.

What angers me is that just as we once suggested a woman’s place is in the home, we now see ourselves entrapped by the need to be at work. Women are not at college to land great providers as they may once have been, but to pursue careers and attain certain lifestyles. Just think about how many people would say you’d wanted the opportunity of Harvard if all you wanted was to stay home with your kids.

Very few seem to consider raising children a challenging, rewarding choice, let alone a singularly important goal. I would never advocate anyone, female or male, sacrificing his or her dreams to please their mate or children. However, when talking with my peers, I seem to be the only one who views staying at home while my children are young as a viable, desirable option.

I want to be with my kids as they grow up and would be even happier to split the time at home with a like-minded husband. Not because I think working parents can’t be great parents — in fact, my mom raised herself, worked full-time and never missed a baseball game or concert. I was surprised when I walked her to her gate at the airport on Sunday and asked what she thought. "Tigi," she said, "I wish I could have stayed home with you." I asked her why. She said she could have been a better mom. "How?" "I could have baked more cookies." I smiled and told her I had plenty of cookies. I couldn’t believe my mom, who did an amazing and unselfish job with us, would doubt that for a second. She showed me that any family and professional combination is feasible.

I hope I will be able to make the choice to be at home while my children grow up. Many mothers and fathers struggle with long hours at multiple jobs in insufficient hours to provide homes for their families and do not have the luxury of deciding to stay home with their children. Conversely, some women and men do not want to stay home with their families full or part time — also a valid choice.

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Very few seem to consider raising children a challenging, rewarding choice, let alone a singularly important goal. I would never advocate anyone, female or male, sacrificing his or her dreams to please their mate or children. However, I do hope we’ve reached the point where we can be creative enough to conceive of ways to blend the joys and hardships of the home with the rigors of the workplace. I’m a firm believer in the credo that necessity is the mother, or better, the parent, of invention.

Perhaps one problem is the image of the stay-at-home parent. What do we envision when thinking of a mother at home with her kids? Classic suburban life, station wagon and picket fence, husband returning to a clean house and dinner on the table? Instead of asking ourselves whether or not to work, we need to decide how we can make the combination of work and family possible. Many parents, like my mom, can work from home. I always figured that was why fax machines were invented in the first place. Some husbands and wives have worked out schedules dividing the week, each spending two or three days at home with their children.

If we, as future leading professionals, decide it is essential that we spend the first few years of our children’s lives with them, the structure of the workforce will continue to change in that direction. Then we will be able to consider the more challenging question of how we extend that flexibility to low- and middle-income parents and single parents who are conforming to set schedules. To transform policies and create lasting change, we all need to include the value of children within our expectations before accepting any job. How will we be able to build a responsive, creative, caring society if we don’t make staying at home with our children a valued and viable possibility?
Graduate Assistants
the people jokingly known as the ments added practicums to the
Current negotiations between
they have the option of joining a work for
unions. Accordmg to Chambers,
time, along with the work we do
have represented the interests of hours from six, some depart-
ments added practicums to the
course selections to help make up
levels of a living wage. However, the
the immediate target is to win
health benefits for graduate assis-
tants.
"We have to go to school full-
time, along with the work we do at school. De-
facto we are full-time people, but they won't pro-
vide us with health benefits."
Current negotiations between
the union and the Board of
Regents have
come to an impact over the
issue. A special
hearing master has recommended
that health insur-
ance be covered, but so far the
regents have resisted. That
issue now rests with the state leg-
islature.
As with any
other union, monitoring contract
compliance and protecting work-
groups is one of the main
jobs for GAU. Chambers notes
that the current contract gives
graduate assistants five sick days
per semester and treats them
in general as full-time employees. Union
dues are one percent of the
salary. Chambers said a major victory came when
the union went to bat for graduate
assistants in some departments
who were trying to force them to
make up hours over spring break.
When confronted, Chambers
said, the departments backed off.
Intersted in learning
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4655.
By Mike Hennessy
Nest assignment editor
USF St. Petersburg graduate assistants may or may not
they have the option of joining a union.
Since the early 1980s, Graduate Assistants Union has
been representing the interests of the
people jokingly known as the
"ugly ducklings.
"The most important thing
we do is negotiate and enforce
the basic contract," said Paul Chambers, a
doctoral student in English
rhetoric and composition.
"We are full-time people, but
they won't provide us
with health benefits."
— Paul Chambers,
Doctoral student and GAU chief negotiator

"We have to go to school full-time, along with
the work we do at school. De-facto we are full-
time people, but they won't provide us
with health benefits."
— Paul Chambers,
Doctoral student and GAU chief negotiator

The union claims 40 percent of
people of teaching at USF is done by
graduate assistants along with up to
80 percent of basic research.
Graduate dean Dale Johnson
disputes those figures, but he
agrees graduate assistants do a
lot of work. "They are a very
important part of the
undergraduate experience and they play a
vital part in research. They are
very busy people," Johnson said.
Another front-burner issue at
USF is the number of academic
hours a graduate student is sup-
pended to take in order to qualify for a stipend and a tuition waiver.
"If we don't have proper documents, they can be detained,
or delayed or charged fees to get back in the country," said Seybold.
The problem that can be very serious for international students is
failing to take enough classes to keep their full-time status.
"Luckily, there is help for foreign students who want to avoid
outside problems while they are studying far away from home. Seybold
comes from the Tampa campus to visit USF St. Petersburg on the
first Wednesday of each month to help troubleshoot problems
international students are having.
In addition to the serious business of helping international students
keep their papers in order; Seybold and her colleagues try to
hold social events such as pizza parties at the USF St. Petersburg
campus in an effort to allow international and domestic students
to get better acquainted.
"Helping international students feel at home is not just altruism.
Educating students from outside the United States is big business.
International student and scholarly services director Dr. David
Austell says education is one of America's biggest export products,
with international students paying an estimated seven and a half
dollar bills in fees and tuition alone.
Aside from the economic impact, there are benefits to student
exchanges between countries.
According to Austell, dean of international studies JoAnn
McCarthey is behind an effort to double the amount of international
students at USF. Up to now, international student enrollment has
been growing at a five percent annual rate. Many students are
attracted to USF's MIS, engineering and public health programs.
New grading policy to begin in fall

By Chris Curry
Nest staff writer

A "B" may never be the same again for USF students. Starting fall semester 2000, all USF teaching staff will have the option of a plus minus grading system. The system will apply to undergraduate and graduate classes and will allow individual faculty members to determine the percentage range that equals a particular letter grade. Here are some hypothetical situations showing how grades could be affected:

Vinny gets a 90 percent in Professor Bob Trotter's American history class. Under the present grading system a 90 is an A in Trotter's class and Vinny gets a 4.0. But if Trotter elects to use the plus minus system next Fall and gives a grade of A- to students scoring between 90 and 93 percent, than Vincent gets an A- and a 3.667.

Dean of undergraduate studies Curtis Wienker said that faculty in multi-section courses who use different books and assignments then another one may also use different grading systems. "The system will be in the syllabus distributed the first week so students can make an informed decision to switch sections or choose another course," Wienker said.

Wienker said that the plus minus system definitely offers some advantages. "I think it will give faculty a little more flexibility in giving students grades that accurately reflect their performance."

But he also identified some drawbacks. For instance, he said a marginal student getting by with C's who gets two C's and two C+'s in a semester will now have a GPA under 2.0 and could land on academic probation without ever getting a D or an F. According to the plan, a C- will "satisfy specified minimum requirements for grades of C including core courses specified in the undergraduate course catalog and common prerequisites "unless otherwise specified in the Catalog." Criminology professor Kim Lersch, the sole St. Petersburg representative on the faculty senate, said the plus minus system passed almost unanimously.

"It's really nice for faculty because I hate it when a student gets an 89. There's a huge difference to me between an 89 and an 80 and I'd like to be able to reward the person with an 89 with something better than a B."

— Criminology professor Kim Lersch on the plus/minus grading system.

There will be no F+ or F- under the new system. Although Schueler doesn't like the grading system, she said she would not avoid taking a class just because the teacher used plus minus standards.

Sophomore Tracy Kmetz, a graduate student in science education, offered a different take. As an undergraduate at Penn State University, she said that she was saved from retaking a calculus course when she got a grade of B instead of a C. "Overall, I think it has its good and its bad points," Kmetz said. "But I think people will appreciate it. It definitely helped me out as an undergrad."

There will be no A+ or A- under the new system. However, there will be an A. The GPA for an A+ would be 4.0, the same as an A, but faculty will be able to put the plus on students' transcripts to show that they had among the highest, if not the highest grade in the class.

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