Students cry foul over grading scale system

USF’s plus/minus scale seems to hurt overachievers.

By Kristie A. Martinez
Senior Staff Writer

R. Coln Nelson’s grade point average has always been 4.0. Since he started attending USF St. Petersburg in the fall of 2000, his grades have either been A’s or A pluses. But last semester, he got his first A minus.

He thought his A pluses would preserve his 4.0 GPA. They didn’t.

Nelson, who now has a 3.98 GPA, is one of many students wondering why the pluses and minuses used in USF’s grading scale don’t always add up.

Since the fall 2000 semester, USF professors have had the choice to grade their students using either regular letter grades or using letter grades with pluses and minuses. Every minus takes .33 of a point off a student’s final GPA. Every plus - except an A plus - adds .33 of a point to the final grade point average.

“For students who do really well, the plus-minus system really only hurts,” Nelson said. “The A pluses don’t balance out the A minuses the way the lower letter grades do.”

Under the plus-minus scale, both an A and an A plus are worth four grade points.

Junior Jenay Rhoads said it’s unfair to penalize students for A minuses while not rewarding them for A pluses.

“If they insist upon using the plus-minus scale, I would assume you had to make the A plus more than four points,” Rhoads said.

Welcome back to chaos

Student union still on hold

A place for students to mingle, play games and watch television is five months late.

By Jim Grinaker
Staff Writer

The Crow’s Nest reported in its Sept. 5 issue that new Student Space would open Sept. 23 in the Terrace building. Almost a half a year later, the new student union has yet to be opened.

The reason for the delay is difficulty in obtaining a cable television hook up as well as a contract to provide arcade style video games, said Director of Student Life Nancy Coscia.

There is no exact date for the space’s opening, but it is hoped it will be opened by late January. However, sources close to the Crow’s Nest said this is a lofty expectation.

The room is to feature televisions, a game room, air hockey and assorted amusements.

The Student Space concept is a temporary answer to Student Government’s requests for more places of recreation for students. S.G. has been requesting more space for students use the past year, said Ron Bugg, Director of Physical Operations.

The Pianoman lot will be lose some parking spaces. Bugg was told the number of spaces lost was 65. However, it may only be 35.

“We are going to have a net improvement in parking since we are a little short now,” Bugg said.

Demolition of building paves way for parking

Destruction of Fountain Inn scheduled for this week.

By Nicole Johnson
Senior Staff Writer

The Fountain Inn, a $2.25 million structure purchased by USF in August, will be demolished this week. But, before construction begins on a student multi-purpose center, the Fountain Inn site will be used for additional parking.

While the campus is waiting to receive the money to construct this facility and risk the chances of liability, officials decided to use the demolished space as a parking lot when USGS begins its expansion come mid January.

“This is an opportune time to do this because the parking lot adjacent to the Pianoman building will be used as a staging area for USGS,” said Ron Bugg, director of physical operations.

The Pianoman lot will be lose some parking spaces. Bugg was told the number of spaces lost was 65. However, it may only be 35.

“We are going to have a net improvement in parking since we are a little short now,” Bugg said.

Yes, we are very opinionated

New expanded opinion section

See pages 2-3

Students on their way overseas

Campus starts study abroad program

Story page 4

Islam, a misunderstood religion

Scholars discuss and debate stereotypes

Story page 6
By Tom Harlan
Guest Columnist

USF St. Petersburg: a future party school?

Although National Lampoon will never make a movie about USF St. Petersburg's student life, this university has the potential to become a bigger party school than some of its in-state rivals.

Before you laugh at the thought of this campus becoming any more rowdy than a local nursing home, consider that within stumbling distance of campus are bars. Add younger students, Greek life and resident halls - three goals of the campus could become a party school where debauchery would be a program of distinction.

Please suspend disbelief until after you read the facts. They are highlighted to distinguish them from the parts of the column that are pure opinion.

1) The Tavern and BayWalk are within stumbling distance of campus. The University of Florida and Florida State University, two notorious party schools that have won as many no. 1 party school rankings as football titles, have never had a bar smack in the middle of campus. Heck, the Tavern could become the most popular college bar in Florida because even lazy partyers or borderline binge drinkers will see its sign on the way to their cars. More adventurous students who don't want to run into their professors can always head to BayWalk after class. If they are smart, they'll tip one of those guys in golf carts to drive them there directly from their class so they beat the rush to their favorite bar.

2) USFSP St. Petersburg is getting younger. Over the break, the St. Petersburg Times reported the average student was 28 in 2001. Now, the average student is 25 and is expected to get younger as the university continues to expand and the student age approaches 21, the average student age in the future. And they won't be any of the stereotypes listed on the surveys students filled out with their professor evaluations last semester. (Some of the suggested student entertainment choices would certainly lead students to drink.)

3) USFSP is going Greek. While most Greeks are far from the "Animal House" stereotype, many of them do enjoy attending socials as much as getting involved with Student Government, homecoming and philanthropies. These socials usually involve alcohol and are held at bars because many fraternities and sororities outlaw drinking in houses or on campus. Although only 10 percent of the students at an average campus are Greek, if this campus has 10,000 students in a few years, and each one of them becomes Greek has one drink at a monthly social, that would be 1,000 more drinks poured per month. Does anyone at this commuter school teach math? Future student drinkers may need the school to hire a mathematician to check that stat out at some point.

4) USFSP plans on getting residence halls. University administrators will crack down on campus drinking, but they'll have their hands full trying to dissuade BayWalk bars from advertising cheap drink specials to attract the 18-25 crowd. When this campus becomes younger, swill merchants will come out of the woodwork and litter residence halls with their propaganda. Students will find cheap drink ads on campus bulletin boards, in the paper, under their door mats and on the windshields of their cars in a soon-to-be built parking garage. And some of these misguided students will visit these bars, consume alcohol and forget about class or the lovely reputation our commuter school that puts education first, debauchery second.

Of course, these potential problems are years away. For now, the students that stay on campus are consumed by sailing, Friday night movies and an occasional beer at the Tavern. But beware, with a few of the planned changes, this school could start to party.

Letters to the editor

RE: USF St. Pete Singers: 30 years of community service (published Dec. 10)

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed reading the feature article in the Crow's Nest about Sudsy.

Thank God, somebody had the decency to give credit where credit is due.

It's history like this that all the newcomers need to know.

There was no "Big Bang Theory" in the evolution of USF St. Pete. There were folks like Sudsy in the trenches creating, weaving and maintaining the fabric that put and is keeping USF St. Pete on the map.

Sudsy and her contributions to USF St. Pete will always be part of my fond memories of working here.

All the best!!!

Gert Anderson

USF Staff

RE: Campus to start Greek system next fall (published Oct. 19)

Dear Editor,

I'm excited to read that Greek life is coming to our campus. I would never have known it if not for you and your great publication.

Diana

Student

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This student-sponsored newspaper of USF St. Petersburg. Published every other Wednesday during the semester.
Plus/minus scale helps most, but hurts top students

By Matt Nelson
Editor-in-Chief

Now, admit it. There have been times when that despised plus/minus grading scale everyone seems to hate has helped you. You have logged on to your computer only to see that you received a surprising, but awesome, B minus. You quickly start up your computer while thinking of all the hard work you put forth in the University of Florida class. You say to yourself, "I surely earned an A. I have my exams and papers to prove it!" Then you see a nightmarish letter disguised as the devil, the A minus. You shutter and get an evil look in your eye. "How in the world can that professor give me a 3.67 GPA for a level work," you yell at your monitor. Well, my friend you are not the only one yelling.

It is either a college student's best friend or worst enemy. The attitude toward it changes like the tides. The infamous plus/minus grading scale even has instructors taking sides.

The fact of the matter is minus grades hurt students. It's reason enough why the University of Florida does not use them. Perhaps UF needs to follow the example implemented at UF. Why punish a student for getting an A, if they happen to earn an A minus? Most people are surprised instructors and professors would have the audacity to give minus grades. There are plenty that do, though.

Are they bad people? No. Do they care about you? Probably not. But are they fair? Yes. They treat everyone the same. Do not tell administration this, but there have been a few instructors to give A minuses to students who were very close to an A. Instructors cannot rationalize moving them up the scale with a whole point, but a few micro-points, that can be done.

The average to excellent student should find the plus/minus scale accommodating. It's the select few like R. Colin Nelson who has a 4.0 GPA for four years of work then receives an A minus. Wow, that hurts. Why is it that someone who has many A pluses then earns one A minus and now has less than a 4.0 GPA? Shouldn't one of those pluses help bring up a lone minus? It makes sense. But then again when has the university used sense has a rationale for decision-making?

Crow's Nest features new column

Between the Lines

By Lisa J. Matzer

A social and political look at the mainstream media

The mainstream news lets us know what is going on in the world and our community. The stories tell us what is important, what we need to know to be informed citizens. But why is this information important, and who decides what is important and what is not? The stories not covered or the questions not asked are the ones that are. They also tell us something about our society. What can we learn when we read between the lines?

Reading the newspaper is one of my favorite pastimes, and ranting about it is another. While you may not always agree with my opinion, my goal is to point out that there is more to every story than what the text is saying. Just the fact that a story appears in the paper says something outside of the actual words used to tell it. For example, last Sunday the St. Petersburg Times published, for the first time, a same-sex couple's wedding announcement. Regardless of your feelings about homosexuality, the more appearance of this announcement speaks volumes about current times. Catch me next issue and I'll tell you what I think it says.
Imagine basking in the sun on the beaches of Rio, scuba diving in Trinidad or day-tripping from London to visit the Eiffel Tower in Paris and earning college credit to boot. With USF St. Petersburg's new study abroad program offered this year, that's exactly what students will be able to do as soon as this summer.

Students will have time to enjoy the pastime pleasures of another country, but more importantly, they will engage in hands-on academic studies to give an international perspective to the students' education at USF.

"You can question more things, and more intelligently by being exposed to more things," said Mark Gaulter, coordinator of international affairs. "Generally it's about helping the maturity of our students and giving them the opportunity to do things they previously haven't had the opportunity to do."

Gaulter, a native of Southampton, England, was hired last June to pioneer the new department at USF St. Petersburg.

"It's great," said Gaulter. "Starting something from nothing is quite nice." Students at USF St. Petersburg have always had the opportunity to participate in study abroad programs, but before this year, they had to enroll through the Tampa campus to participate. Now, they can take trips with faculty for courses designed to complement studies as part of their academic programs.

Dead manatees dissected for scientific clues

By Peggy Goodale

The mild hint of formaldehyde in the cool, boxy air outside the one-story windowless building caused a half-dozen visitors to brace themselves for what they knew would come next.

Inside the building, the pathobiology laboratory of the Florida Marine Research Institute, a necropsy on a baby manatee was about to begin. The manatee was laid face up on the cold metal table. It had been kept in the cooler to await a field trip by USF St. Petersburg journalism students and their instructor, Elizabeth Bettendorf.

It takes a strong stomach to perform — and witness — a necropsy. But the work, although sometimes unpleasant, is important.

"Manatees are so big, so far, there have been 345 necropsies at this lab," said Dr. Tom Pitchford, biologist and lab manager. When a dead manatee is recovered anywhere in Florida, its remains are sent to the lab, on the campus of Eckerd College in St. Petersburg.

Chipboards hanging on the wall contain information on where and when the dead manatee was found. A network of respondents around the state stays on alert for the injured or dead manatee and gets word to the lab when one is recovered, Pitchford said.

"The evidence in the proximity of where a manatee is found is vital. Discovering it close to a waste disposal site or within a high-speed watercraft area is used as a basis for protective regulations protecting manatees, they are still considered an endangered species."

Despite many laws and regulations protecting manatees, they are still considered an endangered species. The specimen undergoing this particular necropsy was recovered in Key Largo, in the Florida Keys. The specimen under going this particular necropsy was recovered in Key Largo, in the Florida Keys.

Manatees have been known to live 50 years. Rommel explained that it is difficult to tell the age of a manatee when it's alive. Unlike other mammals that replace their teeth only once, the manatee's teeth are constantly replaced. The new teeth start in the back of the mouth and migrate to the front. The old teeth in front fall out.

"You have to remove the periosteal bone of the ear after the animal has died and slice it with a diamond saw and examine the growth layer groups to tell exactly what students will be able to do as soon as this summer.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST. PETERSBURG
JANUARY 14, 2004
Demolition

Bugg had promised the demolition to be complete by Jan. 5, but because of certain rules and regulations, the job was put on hold.

Removal of asbestos in the Fountain Inn was completed on Jan. 8. This highly poisonous compound had to be removed before the building could be torn down.

The construction will be fenced in and take place during daytime hours. Heavy demolition should begin Tuesday or Wednesday.

"There will be no inconvenience for students traveling to and from class unless they walk through the area, which they are not supposed to," Bugg said.

As soon as the structure is leveled, construction workers will lay $7,000 worth of rocks and gravel to form a parking lot big enough concern for students, I also hope that it will stay that way.

The lot will then be used to construct a facility. At the same time, the campus hopes to have enough money to begin on a multi-story parking garage.

Union

couple of years. It was budgeted and planned to be open last September, but the unforeseen circumstances have halted its completion.

The long-term solution proposed to meet student needs is a student center on the downtown campus. While the Fountain Inn was purchased in August, it still needs to be demolished. Currently, workers are removing dangerous asbestos that fills the building.

After an architectural plan is conceived, a permanent student union will house recreation activities and events.

Demolition

(U-WIRE) Eleven months and nine candidates remain, but only one will be elected President this year, or it could simply be a re-election for one. The 2004 presidential election is left with a weak line of Democratic candidates with the highest support in a recent poll showing not even 40 percent support for any candidate. Fundraising remains low for the candidates as well, and instead of the weaker of the nine supporting the few strong, the Democrats turned against one another. So the question is, will it take for a Democratic candidate to win?

The most dividing barricade right now keeping the nine Democratic candidates at a disadvantage is donations. Howard Dean, the former governor of Vermont, is the leading money maker for Democratic candidates, but there is a significant gap between his figures and President Bush's.

The Federal Election Commission fundraising dollars for the third quarter of 2003 measured Bush at $50 million compared to Dean's $14.8 million, according to CNN.com. Democratic candidates behind Dean would have to raise a minimum $10.8 million or maximum $14.7 million just to match his figures. However, already Bush has sent an election fund-raising record with 15$ million total, as ABC News reported last month.

Besides dollar figures, Democratic candidates need to work on figures that have been appearing in a series of recent polls. A CNN/Times magazine poll in September put Sen. John Kerry, Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Dean in the top three favored. Kerry led with just 16 percent and in recent months Dean has been the favored Democratic candidate at 20 percent.

In the same poll, numbers showed that only 29 percent would definitely vote for Bush compared to 41 percent who would vote against, with the remaining saying that they might vote against Bush.

Numbers since have only moved in favor of Bush, with a 56 percent approval of Bush's job creation efforts. The increase, however, could be in response to the public relations efforts taken to explain the foreign policy in Iraq and an increase in the Bush administration's discussions about boosting the economy.

But voters were also responsive after reports of more U.S. troops being killed and as the estimated cost of the war in Iraq increased. A month after this news, a poll showed 50 percent of about 1,000 people said they did not want Bush in office a second term. But considering Bush is a wartime president, it will be a difficult election for the Democrats to win. Presidents such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, William McKinley, James Madison and Abraham Lincoln served more than one term while engaged in war.

Keeping this in mind, Democratic candidates will need to focus on solutions for job creation to pull in more voters, while keeping in mind that the war in Iraq, Dean, along with Kerry, believes that job creation should come through infrastructure work for schools and roads, while Lieberman said high-tech jobs and research funds could help the job market. However, one issue of Iraq, Dean takes Kerry's opposing view to criticism. Dean, who was against the war, was first to start a line of criticism when in March he said Kerry was confused because the senator supported the war but later said Bush misled the United States. This has started a stream of criticism among the Democratic candidates that has added to their criticism of Bush, causing them to drift from the issues.

Instead of posing solutions to education reform, leading Democratic candidates have said Bush's No Child Left Behind will never work without the money it needs. And for their stance on U.S. defense, they said Bush has handled the war in Iraq wrong, but we've offered no real strategies for international relations. Democratic candidates can agree on criticizing Bush's policies, but it is their own policies or they can't agree with each other. So, is there a Democratic candidate that has what it takes to win the election?

The holy saturday answer will come in November. At this point, Bush remains the favored candidate, as the Democrats still have not found a formidable opponent.

Make it a habit to partake in the Lord of the Rings Double Feature Event and Dinner Friday, Jan. 16:

2 p.m. "The Fellowship of the Ring"
7 p.m. Dinner and "The Two Towers"

Dinner & a Movie

Merritt is vice president of Student Government and majoring in visual communications. His column will be published regularly by the Crow's Nest.

Merritt is vice president of Student Government and majoring in visual communications. His column will be published regularly by the Crow's Nest.

There have been several instances in recent months that have led me to believe that the students of USF St. Petersburg are unaware that Student Government represents them on a daily basis. Whether it is because they don't know or they don't care is beyond my understanding. So I thought I'd do something about it.

This is the first of a new column in the Crow's Nest. It's purpose will be to inform the campus of all the events and projects that Student Government will undertake or has already completed. My hope is that this will help the students of USF St. Petersburg see that Student Government is not a "token" organization, as I have heard it called before.

I also hope that it will encourage students to speak up if they have an issue with something on campus. Student Government is not a powerless organization. If something is a big enough concern for students, then it should be dealt with.

With the beginning of a new semester, Student Government is looking for representatives to join the organization. Each college has open positions in which students may hold. Those students who hold representative positions will be a part of formulating policy and procedures pertaining to student activities that are funded by Activity and Service Fee money.

The first S.G. meeting of this semester will be held on Jan. 21 at 4:30 in room 133 of the Campus Activities Center. All meetings are open to the public and guests are welcomed and encouraged to give their opinion on any issue discussed.

Those interested in joining or receiving more information should contact the Student Government office in the CAC, room 127; or by phone at (727) 553-4147.

It's our University! Take action to make sure it stays that way.

Crown's Nest, Vol. 34 No. 9
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST. PETERSBURG
Followers of Islam shed light on a misunderstood religion

By Don Wolf
Staff Writer

Jamel Jenni, Assem Mohammad Dandashly and Daanish Mustafa share the religion of Islam. They also share the same concerns, stereotypes and disadvantages placed upon them by the Western world. This misinformation challenges the way they live.

Last Thursday evening they discussed these issues to an audience of over 60 at the Steidinger Auditorium at the Florida Marine Research Institute. Here, "Islam Unveiled: A discussion of religion, culture, tolerance and coexistence" took place.

They had maps, articles and brochures to share. They quoted the Koran, talked about history and their personal experiences regarding the challenges of their faith. Ray Arsenault, a history professor at USF St. Petersburg, made their introduction.

Jenni is a Fulbright Scholar from Tunisia. He had lived in France for six years when most of Europe felt that the northern countries of Africa were considered unsafe. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia experienced times of violence.

Jenni felt the repercussions. All of his co-workers and friends spoke negatively about his religion. They warned each other to never go there. Jenni assured them through friendship that this is not how Muslims behave.

But he also spoke of times of comfort, "Growing up, I had all practices of faith surrounding me. I was a teenager with Christians, Jews, Muslims and non-Muslims. We lived in peace and lived happily."

"It never mattered back then and shouldn't now," Jenni said. "Peace, brotherhood and love all speak the same language."

All three of the guest speakers feel that the difference of language plays a significant role when the Western world and media depict the lifestyles of Muslims.

Through his own translation, Dandashly said a traditional greeting, "Peace, mercy and the blessing of God upon you.

Dandashly is also a Fulbright Scholar. He is from Lebanon and he talked about the intentions and beliefs in Islam.

"There are tragedies that have happened that have

Study Abroad. from page 4

al affairs is also currently finalizing the details for a course in China studying international finance.

Brenda Eyre, a graduate student in the architecture program at USF Tampa, recently went to Tanzania for a directed studies course on the Swahili people and their culture.

"The most interesting thing that my world view was small," Eyre said. "The people that I met surpassed my expectations in terms of hospitality, friendliness and overall personality. I have never met a nicer group of people."

Loretta Roberson, a graduate student in journalism studies, said it is more challenging for her, being in her mid-twenties, to jump into an international studies program. "It would encourage undergraduates, or early 20's who don't have the responsibilities of a mortgage, or massive credit card debt to participate," Roberson said candidly. Roberson has traveled extensively to England, Trinidad, Germany and Italy.

"The best thing about the international studies program is it gives the student, no matter the age, new perspectives," said Eyre.

Roberson recognized the finances could be a major consideration for many students. "As much as you may want to participate in the new program, the financial aspect plays an important role," said Roberson.

International business sophomore, Stephanie Handal, said her major requires her to spend a semester abroad.

"For any student on campus it would be a good thing," Handal said. "It enhances your cultural awareness that things do exist outside the United States."

Handal said that financial aid could be a minor consideration for her, "My parents could probably pay, but I'm sure they would prefer if I could get a scholarship," Handal said. "But, I couldn't determine whether or not I could go."

Gaulter said the specific prices for the courses are still to be determined. Students will be required to pay the normal tuition for the credit hours they earn, and be required to pay for their own airfare. He said that some students often choose to leave the states early, or come home late, so giving them the independence of arranging their own flights allows them to best plan their trip. The cost of the trip includes accommodations, which will be arranged so that all students participating in the course will be in the same general location.

Gaulter said that financial aid will be available to students, and he hopes some scholarships as well. "There are several opportunities available, which I am confident we will secure," Gaulter said. "In some cases it turns out to be as cheap as taking a course here."

After a week of challenging studies, students will be let loose on the weekends to go where and do whatever they want. However, Gaulter cautioned that things operate differently in different countries, and students will need to know how to conduct themselves accordingly before they go. A general instruction into cultural awareness will be a part of every student's preparation for the trip, he said.

The safety of our students is number one," Gaulter said. "But number two we want them to go."

The department of international affairs will be releasing brochures about the study abroad program this week. They will also be spreading the news around campus during this time to talk to students and answer questions.

"They should be experiences people remember for the rest of their lives," said Gaulter.
Most colleges and universities that use plus-minus grading scales do not have an A plus, said Gary Olson, USF St. Petersburg’s interim associate vice president of academic affairs.

Because grading is based on a four-point scale, an A plus cannot be given more weight than a regular A, he said. Olson also said plus-minus scales do not have F minus, because a negative number of grade points cannot be awarded.

“It’s a four-point system,” he said. “You can’t get out of the system.”

Bob Sullins, dean of undergraduate studies at USF Tampa, said it was students who wanted the scale to have an A plus. The USF Tampa student government asked the USF Faculty Senate to add the A plus to the scale. The senate consented, but did not give the A plus any quality points.

Sullins said that giving an A plus more weight than a regular A would make USF’s grading scale inconsistent with the grading scales of many U.S. colleges and universities. This inconsistency would make it harder for students to transfer credits between schools, and would hurt USF, which has had the greatest number of transfer students in the nation for years, Sullins said.

Although a significant number of faculty members wanted a more specific grading scale, students generally objected to the idea of a plus-minus system, Sullins said.

“(Student) input was considered, but grading is a faculty issue,” he said. “The faculty did care what the students thought, but it’s the faculty’s decision.

The USF Tampa student government was “intensely” involved in the decision, but Sullins doesn’t know whether students from USF St. Petersburg, USF Lakeland or USF Sarasota were consulted.

Stephen Ritch, USF St. Petersburg’s former associate vice president for student affairs, said that to his knowledge, USF St. Petersburg students were not involved in the process.

Sullins said the USF Faculty Senate implemented the plus-minus grading scale mainly because a many professors wanted a grading system with more discriminatory points.

USF St. Petersburg psychology professor Mark Pezzo said he uses plus-minus grading because it’s more fair.

“You lose information when you don’t use the plus-minus system,” Pezzo said. “You don’t differentiate between an 80 and an 89. If we assume that the numerical grade that the student got represents their performance, a plus-minus system allows the final grade to be a more accurate representation of their performance.”

Using the plus-minus scale can narrow the range of points students need to earn a certain letter grade. For example, some instructors who use pluses and minuses might require students to earn a 95 or above to receive an A plus, while teachers who don’t use plus-minus grading might expect a 90 or above for an A.

Mass communications professor Jay Black does not use plus-minus grading. In his Communication Ethics class, students who earn a 90 percent or higher receive A’s.

“To cut things too finely and to try to make increasingly subtle distinctions between a straight letter grade and a minus, and a straight letter grade and a plus ... you end up making a decision based on one or two points,” Black said.

He said arguing with students about grades is like “invariably getting nibbled to death by ducks.”

“I haven’t had to fight with students for a long time,” Black said. “I’d rather get on with the business of education. If I could do pass or fail, I would.”

Student David Conkle objects to the fact that the plus-minus grading scale is optional for USF teachers. He said all of the teachers should be required to either use the scale or not use it.

Conkle also said that while his GPA is important, it will not matter in the long run.

“I keep my GPA up for more personal satisfaction or more for pride that I want to do well,” he said. “But I think that a lot of people put more emphasis on their GPA as opposed to learning. It becomes more of a game. You’re jumping through hoops just to get that GPA. But do you sacrifice learning to get that GPA?”

R. Colin Nelson said although his 3.68 GPA does not resonate as much as a 4.0, it is still very high.

“I think the quality of the education is the most important,” Nelson said. “The GPA is important only in so far as it allows me to demonstrate my knowledge of the material I learned. It’s certainly something I’m proud of, but it’s not the end-all and be-all of my existence.”

Gradings from page 1

Letter Grade | USF points | UCF points | UF points | FSU points
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
A+ | 4.00 | (N/A) | (N/A) | (N/A)
A | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00
A- | 3.67 | 3.75 | (N/A) | (N/A)
B+ | 3.33 | 3.25 | 3.50 | 3.25
B | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00
B- | 2.67 | 2.75 | (N/A) | 2.75
C+ | 2.33 | 2.25 | 2.50 | 2.25
C | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00
C- | 1.67 | 1.75 | (N/A) | 1.75

Source: Respective university 2003-2004 undergraduate course catalog

(N/A) denotes that the university does not use a certain letter grade.
Although Costidis found no propeller cuts on the manatees, he couldn’t rule out that a boat had hit it. He pointed out three dark marks on the back of the manatee. Being hit without a cut can result in death just like a wound with a deep cut.

A blow to the body of a manatee can cause a lowered immune system, allowing infections to take over when they wouldn’t normally have a chance in the manatee, a creature considered to have an “amazing immune system.”

“Manatees can survive in some nasty conditions,” said Costidis. The necropsy took two and one half hours. The cause of the manatee’s death was officially registered as “enteritis,” an inflammation of the intestines, usually the small intestine, caused by bacteria, parasites, pollutants or cold stress.

“This was enough to kill it,” said Rommel. The clean up took 30 minutes. After taking tissue samples to be sent to other labs, the guts and carcass were dumped in large trash cans to be picked up by a “renderer” who removes biological waste for incineration. Sometimes the skeleton is saved for a school or science organization.

The head and the tail were saved in the freezer for further examination. Using apple-scented Dawn dishwashing liquid to clean the cutting tools and buckets in a large sink and using Big Orange, a citrus scented degreasing cleaner to mop the floor, all visual evidence of the necropsy was eliminated — except for the subdued looks on the students’ faces.

Marine biologists cut open and research a young manatee at the Florida Marine Research Institute for clues of its death. how old a manatee is,” Rommel said.

The baby was estimated to be between one and two years old because of its length and weight. They could tell it wasn’t a newborn as there was algae growth on its flippers.

“Manatees can survive in some nasty conditions,” said Lightsey. The necropsy took two and one half hours. The cause of the manatee’s death was officially registered as “enteritis,” an inflammation of the intestines, usually the small intestine, caused by bacteria, parasites, pollutants or cold stress.

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Photos courtesy of www.stpt.usf.edu

Fall 2003 graduation

On Dec. 14, 329 USF St. Petersburg students graduated at Mahaffey Theater.

Right: President of Student Government Sue Sletsma delivers a speech at commencement. Below: Dr. Ellen Hufnagal and Cedric Howard stand ready before the ceremony.

Photos courtesy of www.stpt.usf.edu