11-10-2014

Crow's Nest : 2014 : 11 : 10

University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

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University speech codes investigated

By Jennifer Nesslar
Staff Reporter

The American university is thought of as a place where minds are opened and ideas are shared. But most universities have speech codes in place that “prohibit expression that would be protected by the First Amendment in society at large,” according to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

USF St. Petersburg is one of these universities.

The FIRE defends student speech and liberties on campuses across the U.S. They have a database that rates each university’s speech codes, policies they say inhibit free speech on campus as protected by the U.S. Constitution. They review speech codes and rate universities with green, yellow or red lights. In USFSP’s case, three policies were given the red light and two were given a yellow.

Receiving a red-light rating is common at public universities. In Florida, 10 universities have red-light ratings, and three have yellow-light ratings. Only one university, the University of Florida, has a green-light rating.

Azhar Majeed, the director of the FIRE’s Individual Rights Education Program, spoke with The Crow’s Nest about the ratings given to USFSP.

“Literal interpretation of speech codes like the ones at USFSP means that students can be punished for speech protected by the constitution,” Majeed said. “It teaches students the wrong lessons about democracy in a free society,” Majeed said. “It creates a harmful chilling effect on campus discourse.”

Majeed has seen punishment for students who violate speech codes vary from campus to campus. Some students are forced to write apology letters. Others are barred from registering for classes or a semester, which Majeed believes interferes with the student’s ability to get a quality education. But most troubling to him is that record of the student’s punishment goes into their student file.

“That’s something that follows you into your educational career and into your professional career,” Majeed said.

All the red light policies at USFSP are a part of the overall USF system codes and not specific to the St. Petersburg campus itself. Only one yellow light code is specific to USFSP.

The Crow’s Nest contacted Jodi Adamchak of the Office of General Counsel for the USF system about the codes.

“We do update them on a regular basis,” Adamchak said. She refused further comment.

Jacob Diaz, the dean of students at USFSP, said student’s freedom of speech is important to the university.

“We want to uphold First Amendment rights,” Diaz said. “That’s key.”

Diaz said he has worked with the FIRE at previous universities, and he always takes their perspective into account when reviewing policies. He also shows the policies to students and asks them for their feedback.

“I always find that to be an engaging conversation,” he said.

The intention of the codes is not to chill speech on campus, Diaz said.

“When it comes to dealing with student conduct, Diaz said he determines if behavior is in violation of the codes.”

This landmark in Philadelphia, Pa. celebrates the freedom of speech afforded to American citizens through the First Amendment.
USF system codes flag red lights

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education rated USF St. Petersburg's speech codes, and gave it an overall red-light rating. This means that USFSP has at least one speech code that the FIRE believes inhibits freedom of speech. Most of the codes are a part of the USF system, and not specific to USFSP. Here are the codes the FIRE has called to question, including the one code specific to the USFSP campus.

USFSP-specific code (received a yellow-light):

**Student Conduct: Student Rights 14-15**

“The right of respect for personal feelings, freedom from indignity, and to expect an education of the highest quality.”

Red Light Codes:

**USF System Code of Student Conduct: Sexual Harassment 14-15**

“Sexual Harassment – Behavior which falls into any one of sections listed below as 4.14 (a), (b), or (c): (4.14)(a) Conduct which may be interpreted as unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.”

**USF System Policy 0-004: Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Harassment (Including Battery) 14-15**

“A. The following actions are prohibited:
1. Sexual harassment by or between any faculty member, staff, or student, including individuals of the same sex.”

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: ... Such conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive so as to alter the conditions of, or have the potential of effect of substantially interfering with, an individual’s work or academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment. This may include off-campus acts of sexual harassment that have effects on campus which may contribute to a sexually hostile environment.”

**USF System Policy 0-007: Diversity and Equal Opportunity-Discrimination and Harassment 14-15**

“B. Examples of Prohibited Conduct include, but are not limited to:
1. Writing or displaying letters, notes, or e-mails which are derogatory toward any individual’s race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or veteran status.
2. Making comments, slurs, or jokes which are derogatory toward any individual’s race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or veteran status.
3. Making gestures or displaying pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines which are derogatory toward any individual’s race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or veteran status.”

**Golden Yellow Light Policy**

**USF System Student Code of Conduct: Harassment 14-15**

“Harassment – Conduct which creates an unsafe, intimidating or hazardous situation that interferes with the ability of a USF System student or employee to study, work, or carry out USF System functions.”

News Briefs

**CORRECTION:** In a Crow's Nest article last week about bicycle theft, the report mis-named police chief David Hendry.

Class registration for the Spring semester has just recently opened. Make sure to set up an appointment with your advisor to set up your schedule. You can change or make an appointment, use the Academic Advising schedule on MyUSF.

Witness two legends side by side at the Dali Museum. From now until mid-February, the Picasso exhibition is in St. Petersburg. It will feature rarely-loaned works from 20 art museums and collections around the world. This includes many paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures by Pablo Picasso.

**Wednesday, Nov. 12**

Interesting in having a serious conversation and free food? Join Real Talk, a monthly discussion between students, faculty, and staff about diverse topics and issues that affect society and world views this Wednesday in the USC Ocean Room from noon to 1 p.m. This discussion focuses on the extent of Ebola's reach.

Blast into the summer cinema hit, Guardians of the Galaxy, with a free screening on Harbor Walk. Starting at 4 p.m. Harborside Activities Board and the University Student Center bring the intergalactic smorgasbord of heroes to an out-of-this-world event.

**Thursday, Nov. 13**

This Thursday's International Games Day. Head down to the Poynter Library where all kinds of games will be set up throughout the day. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy some video, card, and board games.

**Saturday, Nov. 15**

The St. Petersburg Chapter, Colonial Dames XVII Century, celebrates the 60th anniversary of its chartering. Starting at 1 p.m., the chapter will plan a marker on the John C. and Sarah Williams House at USF St. Petersburg. Celebrate with cake and comments from Jon Williams, president of the St. Petersburg Times (now the Tampa Bay Times) and communications consultant for the Florida Humanities Council.

Uncontested election yields 14 SG senators

**BY JEFFREY ZANKER**

Crow's Nest Contributor

The Student Government senate midterm election ushered in 14 senators. The election was uncontested as 14 candidates ran for 15 empty Senate chairs. A total of 248 students voted online at OrgSync.com with about 906 votes being submitted. Each student voted for 5 out of 14 candidates, which each candidate needed a minimum of 25 votes.

Crow's Nest contributor expressed excitement about the upcoming senators, seeing potential work and improvement for their government. Senate President Taylor Adams expressed excitement with the election results.

“It is exciting to have bright candidates running and who want to work with us to improve our campus,” Adams said.

Victor Sims, 18, is a junior working with the executive branch of SG in the department of University Relations. His reason for running is to present his idea for the system where students can express their opinions to SG members through technology.

“To many SG decisions are based on one percent of the student body, which is the student government,” he said. “I want to create a system such as a polling app, where students can look at our bills and decisions and to comment whether they agree or disagree.”

Richie Marin, 19, is a freshman majoring in Graphic Design with a minor in Spanish. He’s involved with USESP Office of Multicultural Affairs, works with the Spectrum Mentoring Program and participates in clubs such as the Latin American Student Association and the Gay Straight Alliance. Marin noticed that there’s a lack of communication between students and the Senate with no actual representative for student body.

“I want to lend a non-bias distinctive voice for student body and bring open dialogue between them and the Senate,” he said. Vice President Taylor Russell noted the level of experience for new senators.

“It’ll be great to train them,” she said. “Some of them have experiences working with student government and the new students are very eager to speak of their plans with us.”

The elected senators will be sworn-in in November and begin on-the-job training in January. Their voting ability in senate will increase in November and begin on-the-job training in January. Their voting ability in senate will
The repairs to fix the structural damages are estimated at $440,000; however, if SG cannot get sufficient funds, this may be too expensive. While the revenue collected through increased A&S fees could help support the endeavor, this would distance USFSP even further from the average fee of other universities.

"Construction on the pool is planned to start this week," said Jim Grant, construction project manager, "and is estimated to take about four months. It should be reopened around March 15th."

Contrary to what was assumed, the piping in the pool is fine. It is the gutter and drainage system that needs to be repaired.

"Four boxes underneath the pool control the draining, and the problem lies within the main drain at the deep end of the pool," Grant said. "To fix this issue, the box will be replaced; however, refuracing the pool and constructing a new bottom will be necessary."

The depth will decrease from 11 feet to 7 feet. This tactic is the most cost-effective and efficient way to get the pool back up and running.

The USFSP waterfront pool, which is scheduled to re-open in May, is running into funding issues.

By Jack Moscone
Staff Reporter

After nearly a year of being closed, the USF St. Petersburg pool is scheduled to reopen in mid-March. Prior to moving forward with the project, the university decided that the best option would be to renovate the pool rather than replace it. Jozef Gherman, student government chief financial officer, met with administration early last month to discuss possible assistance with funding through an increase in Activity and Service fees.

The annual budget, including the cost of the pool, would be $1,547,190. This would bankrupt USFSP within a few years, Gherman said. For this to work out, Gherman suggested increasing in A&S fees per credit hour and cut activities, or asking administration to pitch in.

USFSP already has one of the highest A&S fees in the state, $25.63 per total credit hour.

Petition for campus parking seeks answers

Between the hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the peak hours for commuting students to be on campus, the parking garage fills quickly. Kalima Haneef | The Crow’s Nest

Students have been vocal in their need for adequate parking.

Between the hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the peak hours for commuting students to be on campus, the parking garage fills quickly.

By Chelsea Abrams
Crow’s Nest Contributor

Answers to students’ parking woes are coming, but official plans are nearly a year away. According to Jim Grant, the university construction project manager, USF St. Petersburg plans to expand the current parking garage. Discussions to finalize this, as well a possible second garage, will begin next year.

"Hopefully, those discussions will generate a more accurate time frame for the development of additional parking facilities as well as their possible locations," Grant said.

But, for now, students continue to make their voices heard about the parking dilemma. A petition to improve parking is in the works by Jozef Gherman, the chief financial officer of student government.

"There are complaints of insufficient parking and there is confusion on what the future of parking is at USF St. Petersburg," Gherman said.

Gherman pointed to the strategic plan, which involves an increase in the student population from 4,760 to 10,000 students by 2020, as the reason for the parking problems. This plan raises questions about parking, he said.

He stressed the importance of making sure students have adequate parking.

"If students have to spend more time finding parking spaces, it can cause them to be late to their classes," he said. "Limited parking has more of an impact on students here than we think."

After hearing complaints from students time and time again, Gherman decided to take a stand.

Gherman has attended USFSP for three years and said he has learned to be a scavenger for parking places. But seeing others struggling with parking as well as what put him over the edge.

"Seeing my fellow Bulls voice repeated frustration and anger, I felt it necessary to take some action to improve the situation," he said.

Gherman referenced the temporary closure of the parking garage’s seventh floor as one of the pressing issues that has limited parking.

The seventh floor, where residents are allowed to park, was closed for the installation of solar panels. Administration allowed residential students to park on the fifth floor of the garage, hindering some commuter students from parking there.

"I believe in this situation the best course of action would’ve been for Parking Services to not enforce specific parking spot regulation for this period of time while construction is happening, and then resuming enforcement after the parking situation returns to normal," said Gherman.

Gherman hopes that if his petition is successful, it will show both the students and the administration that students’ opinions should be taken into account in future matters.

As a part of the strategic plan, more clear answers about parking will be coming at the end of 2015, which the conclusion of the master plan update. This plan tries to anticipate USFSP’s needs for the following 10 year period.

After election, political science professor has goals

Judithanne McLauchlan, USF St. Petersburg political science professor, fell short in her run for the District 22 Senate Seat. She ran against Republican Sen. Jeff Brandes, who won unopposed during the last election in 2012.

But on Tuesday’s election night, her efforts fell short.

The final vote in last week’s election resulted in a loss for McLauchlan, who received a total of 74,662 votes (42.31 percent). Although she lost the election, McLauchlan said she will continue her involvement in politics.

Brandes, who raised millions of dollars during his campaign, spent $600,000 on a TV commercial slamming McLauchlan by saying she supported state income tax, according to The Tampa Bay Times.

Although this commercial continued to air throughout the campaign, Brandes’ claim was quickly shot down by the PolitiFact, a political fact checking website.

"He spent so much money to lie about me,” McLauchlan said in an interview with The Crow’s Nest.

McLauchlan, a Fulbright Scholar, was encouraged to run last fall. She was well aware of the challenges of running in a midterm election, where the voting turnout rate is usually low. But this did not stop her.

McLauchlan’s strong desire to help families in Tampa Bay made ends meet fueled her during the campaign trail. She spent the whole year campaigning, going door to door and calling voters expressing her desire to make the middle class heard in Tallahassee, and to encourage people to go out and vote.

McLauchlan still hopes to see changes made in the state of Florida and here in Tampa Bay. She wants to see an end put to the “pay to play culture.”

Instead of allowing politicians in Tallahassee to get kick-backs from taxpayers dollars, and giving money to big corporations, McLauchlan planned to work towards having money set aside for education and to help make college more affordable.

"If we don’t try, nothing will ever change,” McLauchlan said.

She doesn’t consider herself a politician, she says she is a teacher and is happy to be doing what she loves. Had she been elected, McLauchlan would have worked as both a teacher and a senator.

"As a professor, I would have looked at things in a thoughtful way. I would have done my research and examined information,” said McLauchlan.

news@crowsneststpete.com
Review: The Burg brings community and quality

By PHIL LAVERTY
CROW’S NEXT CONTRIBUTORS

Undoubtedly, there is a local feel to The Burg. Owner Bill Georgiou can be seen welcoming old and new customers, making people feel at home.

The Burg is a small local bar at 1752 Central Avenue in downtown St. Petersburg which offers a variety of craft beers, a unique blend of Greek and bar food, along with a special atmosphere that customers find comfortable and pleasant.

Georgiou, 40, opened Up The Burg in 2011. He wanted to take a chance at a new business venture and decided to go with his gut feeling. Since then the bar has grown into a successful business he envisioned just three years ago.

Georgiou credits the good fortune to a combination of a Greek style family restaurant in the form of a bar.

"My mom makes the soups, desserts, hummus, and most of the Greek food," he said.

The menu’s variety spans from chicken and waffles to gyros. The menu’s got something for everyone, but the chicken lemon soup is a must try. There have healthy salads and lean beef for all the health nuts there that avoid bar food. It’s hard to go wrong when ordering.

"My favorite thing to eat here are the burgers with a healthy plate (vegetable sides)," Georgiou said.

This is not a place that will kill your wallet. The Burg offers food specials between Monday and Thursday, including 50 cent food specials between Monday and Fridays. The exception to this is Tuesday, feasting half-off selected wines and appetizers.

Customers like J.D. Haley, 43, are drawn to The Burg for more than just the food or beer. Haley says he prefers the atmosphere to other generic bars or restaurants.

"I love the specials, the menu, and of course the Belgian beer selection, but what really keeps me coming back are the people," Haley said. "I always end up meeting someone new and find myself enjoying their company and conversation. It’s not the kind of bar that you walk into and everyone keeps to themselves."

The Burg is the kind of bar that makes being stuck inside during a rainy Florida afternoon fun. Casey Petarasukas, 26, who works at The Burg as a bartender, describes the chemistry between her and her customers quite fondly.

"It’s very friendly, family, and local. All around good vibes," Petarasukas said. "When Billy is here, he treats everyone like he’s known them for 20 years. We also get a lot seasonal workers from Tropicana field during baseball season. Our customers are family here."

When asked what she liked most about bartending at The Burg, Petarasukas said, “I love the people. The staff’s easy going. People that tend to come here seem naturally cool. I think that’s what they seemed to like and that’s what I like about it."

The Burg is centrally located in downtown so bar hopping to other establishments without the drive is a convenience.

The Burg is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, but closes at 9 p.m. on Sunday. Friday through Saturday, the bar stays open until 1 a.m. Learn more at www.theburgbar.com

Looking to go?

By AMANDA STARLING
STAFF REPORTER

Club seeks to change views on feminism and gender roles

By SAMANTHA PRITZLASS
CROW’S NEXT CONTRIBUTOR

F o c u s i n g f e m i n i s m . Empowering women. Eliminating gender roles.

These are the goals of the Women’s Empowerment Club, a new club at USF St. Petersburg.

Sophomore and club president Katie Wagner said the club was vice president Kristina Sonstroem’s and former president Judithanne McLauchlan’s “brainchild.”

“We were passionate about feminism and wanted to bring that passion to campus,” Wagner said.

Both Wagner and Sonstroem make it clear that WE prioritize topics of interest to students and continue to grow. And some Cards Against Humanity and classic board games to keep the entertainment going. Not into games? Bring a tablet or laptop to screen Netflix.

The Burg offers a variety of beers at their bar, including different variants of Fat Cat.

Amanda Starling | The Crow’s Nest

Feminism is still a controversial topic in society. Everyone seems to have their own definition of the word, which leads to confusion on what feminism is really all about. Ofentimes, feminism is associated with characteristics like “anti-men” and “extremists.”

Wagner defines feminism as “equality between men and women socially and economically,” in other words, total equality of the sexes. Sonstroem added that it is also about coming together and celebrating successful women in the community.

College campuses throughout the country have problems with issues regarding the empowerment of women and gender equality.

“It’s a global problem in the world in general, and USFSP is not an exception,” Sonstroem said.

Even though some of these issues are not necessarily widespread at USFSP, WE seeks to help not just USFSP, but the outside community, become more educated about such issues and give feminism a more positive meaning. WE does this through discussions where students can express their opinions and learn from other students’ opinions and presentations.

Some topics WE has discussed so far include healthy relationships, slut-shaming, women’s sexuality and trans-feminism. The discussions start out with an ice breaker. Then the topic is presented. The discussions work as an open forum for students to express opinions on the topic at hand. Many of WE topics so far came from suggestions from club members.

Besides discussions, WE host guest speakers throughout the semester. One week, USFSP professor Judithanne McLauchlan, who recently ran for Florida Senate, came and talked about the role of women in politics. Another week, WE collaborated with PEERS to co-sponsor an event in which a representative from St. Petersburg CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse) came and talked about domestic violence and local volunteer opportunities.

Wagner says the group hopes to get together and volunteer for CASA and other organizations in the future. They also plan to reach out to more guest speakers.

Next semester, WE plans to team up with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and organize events for Women’s ‘HERstory’ month in March.

All students are invited to club meetings, regardless of gender.

WE meets every other Monday evening. Visit the USESP Women’s Empowerment Club on Facebook or through Petesync for more information on events and club meetings.
Breaking Beard: the best of the ‘Burg

It’s the time of year when we all become extremely grateful. No, we’re not talking about Thanksgiving. We’re talking about No-Shave November. That time of year when the gentlemen in our lives decide to grow a little scruff on their chins (and hopefully nowhere else).

OK, maybe we’re not all grateful. For those of you who have an aversion to beards, we recommend you lock yourself in your house for the entire month. Avoid anything scratchy. Let’s just hope your roommates aren’t participating in the phenomenon.

In honor of this glorious (or horrifying) time of year, we searched campus for some of the best beards. And wow, USF St. Petersburg has some GREAT beards. Here’s what we found.

Jared Alberico  
Senior  
Psychology

Louis Luttrell  
Senior  
Biology

Jacob Hunt  
USF Alumni  
The Grind

Nick Kempton  
Junior  
Marine Biology

From left to right:  
Justin Toler, Senior, Criminology;  
Cedric Wiggs, Sophomore, Pre-Graphic Design;  
Le’Andre Fletcher, Junior, Education.

Erik Anderson  
Senior  
Marine Biology
Editorial

University: amend speech codes

We have administrators who value students’ freedom of speech. But our current speech codes, if put into the wrong hands, could threaten students’ freedoms.

Freedom of speech is one of the most precious things about being American.

We’re not just saying this because we’re journalists. Freedom of speech goes beyond the glamorous portrayal you see of journalists in movies. It affects everyone, from the most prominent public figure to the guy you stood behind in line for food at The Reef.

Speech codes are troubling to us. Students can leave campus and say what they want, without fear of being punished by the law for it. They shouldn’t be subject to different rules when they step on to a college campus.

We have not seen our speech codes played out on campus. We don’t know of a student, faculty or staff member who has been punished for saying something the university deemed inappropriate. While this is good news, it doesn’t mean our situation is good. Our current codes could be interpreted to the detriment of speech on campus. Just because codes haven’t been applied to punish a student doesn’t mean that couldn’t change in the near future.

We need policies that will protect the free speech of anyone on campus. The codes we have now are vague, and if applied directly, students could be punished for constitutionally-protected speech. They haven’t been abused because we have administration who wants to protect our free speech. But what happens when someone who doesn’t value free speech gets an administrative position? Our codes should be enduring. They should protect speech, regardless of whether we have a thoughtful administration or not.

In The Crow’s Nest interview with Dean of Students Jacob Diaz, Diaz told us he seeks student opinion on codes. While we think Diaz is a protector of freedom of speech, we still think the codes are problematic and could be abused. And while student input is important, just because a student says that they don’t perceive a code to infringe on their freedom is speech doesn’t mean that the code doesn’t.

Many students may look at the codes and believe they protect their best interests. As a staff, we hate sexual harassment and discrimination. A few of us have an aversion for sex jokes (why do you have to make them?). And no one likes to be criticized. But the constitution doesn’t afford us immunity from these things. Yes, physical harassment should and must be addressed by the university. But we can’t ask the university to take action against a student when we hear something we don’t like.

In the words of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis: “If there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence.”

Amanda Starling | The Crow’s Nest

Photo of the week

Clean and green

Construction workers install the 100 kilowatt, 7,100 square foot solar array on the seventh floor of the parking garage last week. The project, a result of a $1 million grant from Duke Energy’s SunSense program, was completed this past weekend.

Shark Bites

By Phil Lavery

Submit a picture with a caption for photo of the week to jnesslar@mail.usf.edu by Friday at 5 p.m. The best photo submission will run next week.
Inspiration from a young delegate

By Jennifer Nesslar

When I was a freshman in college, I was figuring out how I was going to survive my classes. When she was a freshman in college, Saira Blair was figuring out how to campaign.

And she obviously figured it out. On Tuesday, Blair was elected to represent District 59 in West Virginia.

She is only 18.

Rant, if you wish, that she's too young. Complain about her political views, if you'd like. But I think we need more people like Blair.

As a high school student, I lived much of my life in ignoring politics. I didn't understand it, so I didn't try. Blair, on the other hand, decided she wanted to run for office at the end of her senior year of high school. Politics fascinate me, but it makes me incredibly weary at times. It's divisive. Candidates from both ends of the spectrum run ruthless, half-true advertisements about each other. Friends and families fight over it. I'm not one to argue, but last week I got into an argument about politics with one of my closest friends. The worst part of it was, we agreed on the issue we were debating. What is it about politics that does this to us?

And among the riff-raff, the in-fighting and the angry words shared last week, we have this gem of a story. An 18-year-old runs for office, and wins.

The whole story gives me faith in the political arena. It's not about fighting. It's exciting to know that even in this age of nasty political ads, a young woman can still run for office—and win.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that her father is also a politician. But how many candidates can say they campaigned from their dorm room?

She doesn't want to be a career politician, she told several news outlets. But she always wanted to be involved in politics.

Blair realized that she might as well do it now, rather than later in life. Today News reported. Maybe she will struggle with inexperience. It's possible, even likely. But I cannot count the number of times I've wanted to do something but put it off because I could do it later in life. Who knows if I will actually do it later in life? So Blair teaches us an important lesson. Don't put off what you should do now because you think you can do it later.

Did I mention Blair is currently taking 17 credit hours? How many of you are taking 17 credit hours? For the record, I'm taking 12, and I think that's a lot of work. While running this paper. (Cover your ears over-achievers and people who can't say no). Too many of us lazily make our way through college, and then we expect our degrees to instantaneously grant us full-time jobs around graduation.

I'd say people like Blair are going to the ones getting those jobs. Let's be inspired by Blair. Her success as a politician is yet to be determined. But at least she's doing something.

Can we say the same?

Jennifer Nesslar, a senior majoring in mass communications, is the editor-in-chief. She can be reached at nnesslar@mail.usf.edu or on Twitter @jennesslar.

We're not written in the stars

By Emily Tinti

Your health, prosperity and love-life can be foretold in just around 100 characters – whether you'll fail or succeed, if you should seek romance or lie low for some time. Your future foreseen with the touch of a button. These predictions are all over the media and are growing exceedingly accessible to anybody who will believe them.

I'm talking about daily horoscopes. Some people wake up on Monday morning and read their weekly or daily horoscope. They get this general idea of what is expected to happen to them. They fall victim to confirmation bias: when the thing happens, they try to find similar elements of the horoscope and real life and freak out because "it all lines up." It's kind of like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The problem is, unlike the general personality description of astrological signs, these daily fortunes are inconsistent and usually written for the media.

WikiHow actually has a step-by-step article on how to write your own horoscope. The first step is to make general statements like "a very interesting financial transaction is heading your way." It's hard to tell if this article is faced in sarcasm, or if it's genuinely trying to assist people in writing horoscopes.

Either way, it's very telling of just how easy it is to write one. They don't take into account your age, culture, environment and experience. They try to give them in a way people who probably just want to keep you feeling positive, or like you can something to look forward to — which isn't a crime, it's just something to take a bit more lightly.

Don't get me wrong, I love knowing people's astrological signs. Realizing you match the general descriptions and adjectives of your sign is pretty interesting. And honestly, now that I'm aware of our supposed compatibility, I understand the way my friendships and relationships have carried out. I really want to believe it's all true.

Sure, there's astrology behind all of this, and placements of the sun, moon and stars. And then there's the supposed "lunar effect." But, it would be remiss to not mention that multiple studies have been done and have disproven the accuracy of daily, monthly and general life horoscopes.

Others have found, however, that the majority of people fit the personality details of their astrological sign. Which is pretty cool.

I guess it's all up in the air, left for interpretation. If you want to believe that your daily horoscope will foretell the rest of your day, it's not going to hurt you. Just try not to mold your life to make something happen that, based on science, isn't really all that accurate.

Emily Tinti, a sophomore majoring in mass communications, is the arts and life assistant. She can be reached at emilyfaith@mail.usf.edu or on Twitter @_milyfaith.

Knowing myself changed my goals

“I finally know myself. I know what I want to be. To my younger self, who slowly stretched beyond the comforts of home, I say this: thanks for being brave.”

By Amanda Starling

I didn't always want to leave St. Petersburg. In an eighth grade class project about my future goals, I wanted to study biology, attend the University of South Florida, and work at a zoo. Maybe I’d buy a house in Gulfport and enjoy the weekends near the beach. I’d write about it, and maybe that would get me a balance of what I wanted to be.

I didn’t know myself at age 14. I didn’t know who I wanted to be or where I wanted to go. The dreams of my past seem childish, as if implanted by a complete stranger.

The plan has changed over the years. In high school, I finally admitted to myself that scribbling words and forming them into stories was my real talent. I had a way of taking charming words and shaping them into something more compelling. I followed the passion my instructors fostered to USF St. Petersburg, to part-time jobs in writing, and into the lives of the most fascinating people I could imagine.

College changes people. But I think that a lot of that was in my own hands. Sure, branching out into independent living and working forced me to grow up. I’m taking care of myself and balancing aspects of my life that I had never done before. Making macaroni, rushing to my next shift, and shuffling through pages of my textbooks was more than I had bargained for.

But the bustle of these mandatory activities for survival didn’t hold me away from what shaped my personality. Like any college kid, there were some good relationships, some bad, and some mistakes. I dabbed in genres of music, art, and food. I realized I love punk music and can’t stand banal chords and lyrics in country. I prefer the DIY scene for the arts than the amphitheaters and museums (But I won’t say no to seeing the Picasso exhibit at the Salvador Dali Museum. Classic.).

Growing into an adult meant pushing myself out of my comfort zone. I’ve wandered into concerts solo and immersed myself into the music. I’ve spent evenings alone listening to records and skimming through books, without depending on the company of others. I’ve worked 40 hours or more a week, raking in a paycheck that builds the bank and my pride. Independence is everything, and I know it’s rooted in the strength I’ve bred. I left the country for the first time this past summer. I spent a week cruising the Irish countryside, envisioning the inspired literary geniuses that came from this gentle, gorgeous land. I mourned the tragedies that once plagued this nation. I celebrated the blossoming future of a country that has reached peace. I was already planning my next adventures as I boarded the plane home.

I know I want to write. I thirst to see beyond the waters of Tampa Bay. I want to immerse myself in rich cultures that cultivate my passions for arts, community, and life. I know my happiness is tied to my actions, and not to others.

I finally know myself. I know what I want to be. To my younger self, who slowly stretched beyond the comforts of home, I say this: thanks for being brave.

Amanda Starling, a senior majoring in mass communications, is the managing editor. She can be reached at astarling@mail.usf.edu or on Twitter @starlingaj.
Wide receiver reminisces, dreams of future play

Andre Davis scores on a 51-yard touchdown pass against No. 19 East Carolina back on Oct. 11. Davis, who has broken nearly every major USF receiving record, will play his last home Bulls game at Raymond James Stadium on Nov. 28.

By Andrew Caplan

Staff Reporter

Andre Davis didn’t originally intend to break nearly every major USF receiving record, but he did just that.

At 6-foot-1, the senior wide receiver currently holds 12 USF receiving records, including being the school’s all-time leader in receptions, reception yards and touchdowns. And to think, he almost went to Florida State University.

As a child, Davis learned to play multiple sports. He learned to catch the football with his hands at six-years-old from playing catch with his father. A few years later, Davis went to Florida State University. But his family and friends have not just seen him play, they’ve watched him take control of games, scoring game-winning touchdowns.

"It just stuck, 'cause I kept making plays like that," Davis said. He recorded 3,158 yards and 40 touchdowns while at Jefferson, which helped him be named a three-time all-state selection. Those numbers propelled Davis into the spotlight of the college recruiting circuit.

The Tampa native always knew he’d play college within the state of Florida, but had trouble deciding between the Seminoles and the Bulls. Davis elected to stay local because of the “family atmosphere” he’d play college within the state of Florida, but had trouble deciding between the Seminoles and the Bulls. Davis elected to stay local because of the “family atmosphere” the Bulls showed. It reminded him that he wanted to stay close to his own family. It provided the chance for his family and friends to watch him play under the lights at Raymond James Stadium.

"I’m a big mama’s boy," Davis said. "For Mama to be able to come out and watch him play under the lights at Raymond James Stadium.

Knowing kids look up to him, Davis said in his downtime he likes to just play video games (NBA2k and Madden), go to the movies or just listens to some of his favorite rap artists (Yo Gotti, Young Thug and ‘older’ Lil Wayne).

With his senior year coming to a close, Davis has been forced to think of life beyond USF. He hopes to play in the NFL and said he wouldn’t mind staying in Tampa again.

"The Bucs are my team," Davis said. "But I’m open to playing for anybody, just to have the opportunity to play, it’ll be nice."

According to NFLDraftScout.com, Davis is ranked as the 33rd best wide receiver in college football. But before he runs to the pros, he has one last game to play at home on Nov. 28 against an in-state rival, UCF. "Freakshow" said beating UCF was one of the team’s biggest goals for the season.

"It’s the last home game at Ray Jay, as a Bull, so there will be some feelings involved," Davis said. "I’m definitely going to miss it, being that it’s my last game, I’m definitely going to cherish it and try to make it my best one.'

"That’s where I grew up and I love being around kids..." Davis said. "Being a role model for them, I feel like I actually had an opportunity to help kids."

Knowing kids look up to him, Davis has made it a point to stay out of trouble during his years in college. He said in his downtime he likes to just play video games (NBA2k and Madden), go to the movies or just listens to some of his favorite rap artists (Yo Gotti, Young Thug and ‘older’ Lil Wayne).

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