

OUR STANCE

## UF clinches top party school title

For the last issue of the summer we thought we would take a look at an issue that deals with a relatively lighter nature. Yes, it looks like Gainesville has yet another honor to add to its belt, but this time rather than a sports title, the award has to do with what happens after the game is over. The University of Florida was ranked as the top party school in the nation by the *Princeton Review Annual Guide*, which publishes the list along with more than 50 other categories.

Whether this title is something to be proud of is up for debate. Some students say they aren't surprised by the ranking and frankly, neither are we. Freshman Allison Belanger, a journalism and political science major, said she's only been on campus for a few weeks but already has had no problem finding a party. She told the Associated Press that all she has to do is leave her dorm and there will be a party going on somewhere near by.

The Princeton Review states that the party school category is based on the answers to a combination of survey questions on the use of alcohol and drugs, hours of study each day and popularity of the Greek system.

UF President Bernie Machen claims that the party atmosphere is most likely brought on by students who study incredibly hard during the week and use the weekends to blow off steam.

Sorry, Bernie — that may be what you would like to believe, but the statistics show the opposite. In the same Princeton Review study, guess who is at the top of the list for students that study the least? You guessed it. According to the *Gainesville Sun*, UF has been ranked in the top 20 party schools since 2005, right about when Machen started efforts to reduce binge and underage drinking.

Machen has tried to make curbing alcohol abuse a top priority since his appointment in January 2004. Four students died in alcohol-related incidents in his first two years as UF president, which prompted him to involve the Gainesville community to address the issue. He told the *Gainesville Sun*, "It's fair to say it's a problem in our community and we're working on it."

Apparently the Gainesville City Commission doesn't think he's working hard enough. Commissioners proposed an ordinance on Monday that would require local bars to apply for a special permit that would let them serve patrons between the ages of 18 and 21. If approved, the ordinance would punish bars with "excessive" underage drinking violations by revoking the permit.

The permit idea is an excellent one. Underage drinkers are often admitted into bars and then rely on friends who are of legal age to purchase drinks. If a bar's management can't con-

trol the distribution of alcohol then they shouldn't have underage patrons in the first place.

As we stated earlier this week, Gainesville is known for being a traditional college town, and with that connotation comes the hard partying atmosphere. It's no coincidence that West Virginia University and Penn State University are almost always in the top five party schools. Morgantown, W.Va., and State College, Pa., are notorious for their small town feel and large bar populations. West Virginia is certainly no stranger to the list as they have been named top party-school seven times in the last 15 years.

Perhaps the reason these college towns are always making the list is because in relatively small towns like Gainesville there are usually more bars per capita than any other establishment. Some of the other UF rankings this year include No. 1 in the popularity of intercollegiate sports and number two in "jock schools," where sports and fraternities are popular.

Maybe if there was more to do in Gator nation they wouldn't have to worry about students partying themselves into oblivion. That's not to say UCF doesn't have a reputation for partying hard, but at least there are more options for students who would rather save some brain cells. We congratulate UF on yet another title — except this one you can keep.



DON WRIGHT / PALM BEACH POST

## Going on the Web and into the Future

As I take the time to write my last column as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Future*, I try and look forward into the spectrum of time and not stay muddled in the past.

I have fully enjoyed being the editor of this newspaper. Over this summer, my editorial staff and I have worked as hard as we could to provide you with the most factual and timely news as possible.

However, there is more we will be doing to get the news to you.

Starting during the break, I will be serving as the Online Editor. This will mark a brave turning point for the *Future*.

During the fall semester, there will be a redesigned version of our Web site,



JEFF RILEY  
Editor-in-Chief

www.centralfloridafuture.com. On the new Web site, we will be featuring a new buffet of content.

You will be able to find information about breaking news, events around campus, video, audio and photo galleries.

Also, you will be able to get updates on your phone by signing up for text message notices.

The goal is to create a one-stop depot for everything you need to know about what is going on around you. I want to create a news empire on campus because I am of the opinion that you, as a student, should never have to look anywhere else for news at UCF.

So stay tuned, and keep yourself updated.

### READER VIEWS

#### Cook is justified in his Eucharist sharing action

I am surprised by the response of many Catholics, if the details reported in your "Body of controversy" article are accurate. Catholics believe that the cracker is not a symbol of Jesus' body, but is actually a part of the body. Therefore, it seems to me that Cook was taking the message of Christ in the most literal sense to his friend.

I've experienced the Catholic Campus Ministry service before. As a non-Catholic, like Cook's friend, I have been told I am not allowed to participate in the Holy Communion. However, as a Christian, I believe I most certainly am. This is not out of disrespect to the Catholic beliefs, but out of respect and devotion to my own.

I have mixed feelings about Cook (and all Catholics) saying who can and cannot partake in Communion, but he was definitely right in wanting to share the act with his friend. It is not Cook who got the message wrong this time; it is those who stand in the way of believers reaching out to non-believers.

AARON BRAND  
ANTHROPOLOGY MAJOR

#### Medical amnesty policy should be reconsidered

Kerry Welch should research the history of the previous medical amnesty plan and the initiators of it. The medical amnesty article quoted Mr. Welch as saying "The reason for the proposal was sparked by problems with alcohol ... The reasonable approach would be to apply it to alcohol first and then take further steps if it's effective." This quote is a flat-out distortion of truth. While I respect Mr. Welch for his work and dedication to students, I urge him to realize that medical amnesty at UCF was the brainchild of Tina Kimball, the former president of NORML@UCF.

Moreover, the policy was picked up by Caroline Talev, the former secretary of NORML@UCF. Furthermore, Derek Harris was most recently aided by Justin Martineau, a former president of NORML@UCF. To say that all these drug policy reformists were only interested in medical amnesty because of "problems with alcohol" is an absurd notion and should not be so easily believed by students and readers. While alcohol is one of the most dangerous substances for the average college student, safety should not be restrained by public perception.

I urge the administration to reconsider its position on medical amnesty and the inclusion of illicit substances. To say it would taint the image of the university is not wise, seeing as how Ivy League

universities are not tainted by the programs; seeing as how near 70 percent of students surveyed by Derek Harris and the administration wanted the inclusion of illicit substances; seeing as how the administration's salaries are burdened by the backs of the students, the same students who are being excluded from a medical amnesty policy meant to prevent deaths. I urge Dr. Ehasz, President Hitt and Mr. Welch to reconsider their position and advocate safety over the perception of safety.

BRENDON RIVARD  
PRESIDENT OF NORML

#### Catholic Communion sharing not holy bigotry

I am a UCF alumnus (bachelor's of political science in 1993; master's of biology in 2003) and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Arizona. When UCF makes national news, I automatically pay attention, and recent UCF news is disturbing.

I refer to the cases of Webster Cook and Benjamin Collard, in which the former pocketed and later returned a Eucharist cracker. The hyperbole surrounding this case is absurd, the implications chilling.

A spokesperson for the Catholic League has suggested that Cook's actions qualify as a hate crime, and his impeachment by the student senate seems to echo this sentiment. Catholic Campus Ministry has not only called for Cook's expulsion, but have filed a complaint against Collard, who was not involved in the incident. The claim that this was a hate crime dilutes the phrase to the point of rendering it meaningless. Equating this case with genuinely hate-motivated lynchings and beatings belittles the seriousness of these crimes.

There is no reason to suspect that Cook's actions were motivated by anti-Catholic bigotry. Further, to qualify as a hate crime, there should have been a crime, and there is no evidence that Cook broke any law. The only part of this case that comes close to being a hate crime is the death threats that Cook has received.

In fact, neither Cook nor Collard has done anything that merits disciplinary action. What Cook did (Collard did nothing) is violate the internal rules of a private organization. UCF should not be in the business of enforcing such rules. Any consideration of disciplinary action toward Cook or Collard should be abandoned immediately. Persecution of Cook and Collard is just that, and the administration should speak out against it. This case, and the national coverage it has received, is an embarrassment to UCF.

MATTHEW D. HERRON  
UCF ALUMNUS

## Foster knowledge or accept inferiority

The aspiration to learn and absorb knowledge is essential to human nature. As humans, we have the innate desire to explore the world of academia and search for solutions to life's ambiguities.

This is what characterized our past — an America in which "the average American's level of education rose by 0.8 years per decade between 1870 and 1950 and the average adult had completed eight years of schooling in 1890 and nearly 14 years by 1960," according to the *New York Times*.

However, it seems as though the technological world has revolutionized the way Americans behave and the thirst for knowledge has been quenched by the remedial nature of American culture.

While pointing the finger may be a temporary fix to this problem that pervades the U.S. education system, it is not a viable solution that excites action or reform. You cannot force a person to learn; learning must be the product of self-will and must appeal to the person without coaxing or persuasion.

In the same *New York Times* article, Heckman highlights important characteristics that affect children as young as age 5, when educational attainment is disproportional: "motivation levels, emotional stability, self-control and sociability."

However, not everyone agrees on how to handle educational attainment as evidenced by columnist David Brooks of the *New York Times*, who references populists as they urge for human capital policies, such as radical labor market reforms. He refutes, "It's not globalization or immigration per se that widen inequality. It's the skills gap. Boosting educational attainment at the bottom is

more promising than trying to reorganize the global economy."

For years, America has had the upper hand on its European counterparts in terms of educational progress. For example, "In 1950, no European country enrolled 30 percent of its older teens in full-time secondary school" while "In the U.S., 70 percent of older teens were in school," as reported in the *New York Times*. At present, it is plain to see that America is no longer superior in educational growth.

Authors of *The Race Between Education and Technology*, Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, emphasize the absence of inequality once education overpowers technology and likewise, the presence of inequality once the imbalance is reversed.

To help qualify the origin of this decline in education, James Heckman of the University of Chicago explains what is not at fault: "It's not falling school quality ... nor is it primarily a shortage of funding or rising college tuition costs." Rather, Heckman directs attention to family environments which he notes, "have deteriorated over the past 40 years," according to the *New York Times*.

While there may be interests groups dedicated to educational reform, there is no political party. Therefore, it is difficult to garner a sufficient amount of concern to stimulate change. Stereotypically, Democrats identify with the needs of minorities and therefore may gravitate more strongly toward educational development for the working class.

For instance, Democratic nominee Barack Obama has educational proposals that warrant acknowledgement.

According to *The Hill*, "Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.)

unveiled an \$18 billion education proposal ... that seeks to improve U.S. schools in part by rewarding teachers based on merit."

The Obama proposal indicates that this merit-based pay aims to, "encourage teachers to continue to acquire needed skills, enhance the expertise available within schools and improve learning for many traditionally under-served student groups."

Additionally, Obama would supply \$10 billion in funding to improve early education for pre-kindergarten children as well as \$18 billion per year on early education and K-12 education. This demonstrates the receptive nature of the Democratic Party and its candidate, Barack Obama. We cannot ignore problems that ultimately and adversely affect our country. If we continue, our inferiority in terms of education with foreign countries will one day become subservient to their incomparable advancement and superiority.

Brooks poses the question, "Why did the United States become the leading economic power of the 20th century?" to which he answers, "... A ferocious belief that people have the power to transform their own lives gave Americans an unparalleled commitment to education, hard work and economic freedom."

When did this mentality become void of belief? When did the idea of self-efficacy and autonomy become trivialized to the point of extinction? If we as a society lose our desire to transform our own lives in terms of knowledge, then we must simultaneously surrender our economic freedom and watch our country fall prey to intellectual destitution.