USF employee Danita O'Neill, who has transferred to the St. Petersburg campus, updates the community on her progress since the attack by her former husband. Page 3.

The holiday spirit prevailed at USF, as faculty and staff opened their wallets and gave so that children and families could have a better holiday. Page 6.

Changes to the Florida Retirement System will begin this year. Page 7.

The opinion column will return in February.

Community

President terminates Al-Arian, citing campus safety issues

The university's board of trustees voted 12-1 to ask President Judy Genshaft to terminate Professor Sami Al-Arian, after listening to an attorney's legal opinion about whether Al-Arian's conduct had risen to the level of warranting discipline. Genshaft did so later that day.

"After much thought, I have come to the sad conclusion that if Dr. Al-Arian remains an employee of the university, the certainty of prolonged disruption of the university and the continuing threat to our students, faculty and staff is profoundly real," Genshaft said.

Gov. Jeb Bush agreed with Genshaft's decision. On Dec. 21, he said: "Professor Al-Arian chose to create a situation in which his presence on campus would seriously threaten the safety of the students he was hired to teach. Because of his persistent conduct, it is clear that it is not safe for Professor Al-Arian to return to the USF campus to carry out his teaching duties. Professor Al-Arian is failing to meet his fundamental obligation to USF and its students."

The Faculty Senate decided to call an emergency meeting to discuss Al-Arian's termination at 3:05 p.m. Jan. 9 in the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute's Westside Conference Center.

The termination came after an emergency board of trustees meeting on Dec. 19. Most of the university's deans, including Al-Arian's dean in the College of Engineering, Louis Martin-Vega, were present.

The board made its decision after listening to attorney Tom Gonzalez, who was hired to review the case.

Gonzalez said that Al-Arian, a tenured engineering professor, had failed to meet the requirements of his collective bargaining agreement, which stipulates that "an employee's activities which fall outside the scope of employment shall constitute misconduct only if such activities adversely affect the legitimate interests of the university or board."

"His off-campus conduct has caused disruption at the university," Gonzalez said.

While it is clear that Al-Arian is entitled to First-Amendment protection, he is a public employee and that right must be balanced against the harm caused to the university, Gonzalez said.

There has never been a case similar to this in the United States, when the nation is at war, but several other Supreme Court decisions favored the employer, Gonzalez said.

Board members listened as Martin-Vega related the difficulties the Computer Science Department has dealt with since Al-Arian appeared on Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor." show on Sept. 26. Professor Robin Murphy's news about her efforts to help at the former World Trade Center was overshadowed by Al-Arian, Martin-Vega said. Instead of focusing on her research, people were focused on where Al-Arian's office was, he said.

"I think it's going to be really hard to recuperate from some of the situations we're going through," said Martin-Vega, who came to USF from the National Science Foundation a few months ago. "Explaining (this) has become almost a daily part of my job. It changes the way we make decisions about recruitment."

In addition to the difficulty of recruiting faculty and students because of the Al-Arian situation, Alumni Association members are failing to renew, Gonzalez said.

Several trustees said they were most concerned that the University Police could not guarantee the safety of students, faculty and staff on campus.

"So while he's here, we've experienced disruption and threats, and while he's not here, we've experienced dis..."

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THE BIG PICTURE

USF St. Petersburg news bureau covers the stories

The Neighborhood News Bureau has begun operation at USF St. Petersburg with an initial offering of stories centered on the new Main Street district in the 22nd Street South redevelopment area.

Any newspaper, magazine, radio or television station may publish any of the stories at no charge. Stories will be sent by request via fax or e-mail.

The Neighborhood News Bureau will regularly release news budgets of available stories. The media outlet first requesting a story will be given exclusive rights to that story.

Any media organization using stories from the bureau must credit the bylined writer and the Neighborhood News Bureau.

"It's all part of our effort to move into the community.

We've been very interested in the revitalization," said campus CED Bill Heller in a St. Petersburg Times article.

The news bureau is a project of the Program for Journalism Studies at the St. Petersburg campus.

Most of the writers contributing stories are advanced reporting students. Graduate assistants Traci Johnson and Melvin Baker manage the bureau.

G. Michael Killenberg, the bureau's faculty director, explained that the bureau has three major goals: to produce stories, features and announcements for use by local and regional news media and community organizations; to function as a community connection for collecting and disseminating information and news; and to provide training for journalism students at USF and other schools.

Eventually, Killenberg plans to move the bureau into an office on 22nd Street South, the historic main thoroughfare of the black community that is in the midst of a revival, according to the Times. For now, the bureau is working out of the office of the USF St. Petersburg newspaper, The Crow's Nest.

The news bureau also produces the monthly newsletter for the 22nd Street Redevelopment Corp. Inc.

by Deborah Kurettle

Sharpton to speak on MLK Day

The Rev. Al Sharpton, activist and potential presidential candidate, will headline events for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on campus.

Sharpton will speak between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Jan. 15, on the Tampa campus' MLK Plaza. The holiday will be observed on Jan. 21.

For more than 20 years, Sharpton has played a major role in the civil rights movement.

"Time Magazine said that he has emerged as the most important black leader in New York City," Sharpton has said on cable TV news shows that he is considering running for president in 2004.

He has been an outspoken opponent of police brutality, and has shed light on it by forcing politicians and city leaders across the United States to examine the issue.

He met with former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno on the eve of the Re deem the Dream 17th Anniversary March on Washington in August 2000 to discuss an executive order from the nation's capital to penalize offenders of racial profiling and police brutality.

The following day, Sharpton and Martin Luther King III convened the Re deem the Dream march to commemorate King's 1963 march on Washington.

Since then, Sharpton has mobilized many rallies across the nation and is often the first person victims call when they have been subjected to police violence.

Sharpton has also called for economic empowerment, fair labor practices and partial business policy.

In 1996, Sharpton published his autobiography, "Go and Tell Pharaoh." He began preaching at age 4, when he spoke to hundreds at Washington Temple Church in Brooklyn. He was known as "The Wonder Boy Preacher.

For more information about King Day events, call Tracy Dace at ext. 4-3195.

Hiaasen to appear at conference

Author Carl Hiaasen and novelist June Smiley will headline the 20th Annual Florida Sun coast Writers' Conference at USF St. Petersburg on Feb. 7-9.

Hiaasen, who writes columns for The Miami Herald and books such as Sick Puppy and Striped Treach, will give the keynote address at 1 p.m. on Feb. 7 in the Campus Activities Center. He will discuss "The Art of Interviewing Exotic Dancers" at 9 a.m. on Feb. 8 in Davis Hall.

Hiaasen has made a career of exposing everyone from sleazy Miami councilmen to the Disney Corporation. His colleague at the Herald, Dave Barry, describes Hiaasen as "one of South Florida's most valuable natural resources, a relentlessly sordid voice in a howling hurricane of hypocrisy, holokum and hype.

Smiley, whose book Moo is a black comedy about academia and society, will speak during the 7:30 p.m. dinner on Feb. 8. She will also give two workshops: one on women in novels and the other about the novel and the reader-writer relationship on Feb. 9.

The Boston Globe called Smiley's novel Moo "smart, irreverent and wickedly tender ... a mix of Tom Wolfe's wit and John Updike's satiric reach.

In addition to Hiaasen and Smiley, the conference will feature local authors such as Tim Dowey, author of Florida, Roadkill, and Rick Wilber, a USF journalism professor and author of Where Gamagolda Waits, and Other Baseball Stories.

Writer's Digest magazine recently hailed the confer- ence as one of the Top 10 Workshops/Conferences for Writers in the U.S. The conference offers 54 workshops on topics such as the novel, the short story, nonfiction books and mystery and suspense.

Cost to attend the events varies from $35 for the Feb. 8 banquet to $175 for the entire conference. For details, call Elissa Henderson at ext. 4-5775.

Al-Arian

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rump and threats," said board member Steve Burton, an attorney and alumus. "We have no choice, in my opinion, than to dismiss him.

Some of the threats were very general, explained University Police Sgt. Mike Kluegel. 'And threats have no expiration date,' he said.

Al-Arian was placed on paid leave after "The O'Reilly Factor" appearance.

Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert noted that Al-Arian, who came to USF in 1986, has spent about 15 percent of his time on leave or sabbatical.

He was placed on suspension in 1996, while USF and the FBI investigated his World Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE).

Sawyergt argued for suspending Al-Arian without pay and was the lone vote against the motion. "It would demonstrate that we, the University of South Florida, are bigger than our own antagonist.

"We need to take action; I don't believe a suspension without pay will (solve the matter)," said Rhea Law, who made the motion to ask Genshaft to terminate Al- Arian.

She pointed out that Al- Arian had been insubordinate by returning to campus when he was told to stay away.

The professor is incapable of fulfilling his role as a teacher and a researcher, said Dr. Margarita Cancio. "Dr. Al- Arian has a right to his views, and I respect him for that. But what I have a problem with is he cannot do his job at the university."

After the vote, former Faculty Senate President Nancy Tyson said she was suspicious about the timing of the meeting, when faculty and students weren't on campus.

Tyson said she has gotten to know Al-Arian since his national television appearance. "I simply don't think he's been out agitating for terrorist causes (since then). I think he's been out defending himself." by Lisa Cunningham