By Emily Wunderlich ewunderlich@mail.usf.edu
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The Senate champion of a bill that would strip the St. Petersburg campus of its independent accreditation sees USF Tampa, Florida State University, the University of Florida and St. Petersburg College as schools with “vision.”

USF St. Petersburg? Not so much.

In a telephone interview with The Crow’s Nest on Friday, Sen. Jeff Brandes, R-St. Petersburg, said he has long regarded the St. Petersburg campus as a school without a vision, which will come as a surprise to faculty and administrators who have a 28-page strategic plan called Vision 2020.

“I’ve expressed concerns for the last eight years that the leadership team could not clearly define for me the vision of the campus,” Brandes said.

The senator also brushed off criticism that the proposal to consolidate the St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee campuses under the control of Tampa was sprung without notice and buried in the last two pages of a 52-page bill.

He said it did not matter whether the section on consolidation was “at the end or the beginning” of the lengthy bill and that he expected Rep. Chris Sprowls, R-Palm Harbor, the principal House sponsor, to inform the St. Petersburg community.

“I think it’s going through the course that every single other bill goes through,” Brandes said. “I guess the question is, how is this proposal different from any other proposal (in the Legislature)?”

He also said that when he alerted USF system President Judy Genshaft in late October that legislators were mulling over the proposal, the conversation lasted only 15 minutes. She was “absolutely shocked,” he said.

On the same day that Brandes predicted that the proposed consolidation of the three campuses will be enacted, three of his legislative colleagues were at a town hall meeting in St. Petersburg, where opposition to the proposal has grown from a grumble to a roar.

Sen. Darryl Rouson, D-St. Petersburg, and Reps. Ben Diamond, D-St. Petersburg, and Kathleen Peters, R-South Pasadena, got an earful from 18 people who praised the St. Petersburg campus as a community treasure and called for the legislation to be rejected or at least postponed until it can be thoroughly studied.

“There is nothing positive in this,” said Robert Ryan Carter of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, which has joined Mayor Rick Kriseman, the St. Petersburg City Council, the Pinellas County Commission, U.S. Rep. Charlie Crist, D-St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg NAACP and other community groups in calling for a delay and further study.

The proposal is “not going to give (USF St. Petersburg) more money, it’s not going to give them more power,” said Carter. “It’s going to give Tampa the power, it’s going to give Tampa the money, and it’s going to remove any positive from our local programs.”

Other speakers at the town hall meeting alluded to St. Petersburg’s distrust of Genshaft, who has changed her position.

“Tadlock first thanked the retirees for voicing their opinions and added that it was something he could not do because he must “walk a very thin line.” Tadlock acknowledged having concerns upon learning about the legislative proposal in January. He said he drove to Tampa to meet USF System President Judy Genshaft to address those concerns face-to-face.

“Tadlock slipped up?”

By Jeffrey Waitkevich
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Interim Regional Chancellor Martin Tadlock might have accidentally spilled the beans on where he stands on a proposal to abolish the independent accreditation of the St. Petersburg campus.

At a meeting Tuesday with the campus’ Retired Faculty and Staff Association (RFSA), which strongly opposes the proposal, Tadlock was pressed to reveal his position.

“I should, but if I did you’d be looking for someone else tomorrow,” he responded. “It’s a tough position to be in for me.”

His comment came at a lunch meeting where Tadlock’s written statement, titled “Why not taking a position is taking a position,” was placed on every table.

Michael Killenberg, the founding director of the USF St. Petersburg journalism department, criticized that position.

“I want you to stand up as the leader of the campus and say, ‘No, this is not what was intended,’” said Killenberg. “I would expect our leaders to stand up and not say that standing a stand is taking a stand.”

Tadlock first thanked the retirees for voicing their opinions and added that it was something he could not do because he must “walk a very thin line.”

Because of a production error, 11 paragraphs were missing in last week’s story about USF system President Judy Genshaft and the proposal to abolish the separate accreditation of the St. Petersburg campus. The full story runs today on page 4.

THE CROW’S NEST

THE CROW’S NEST is the weekly student newspaper at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. All content in the publication is produced by USFSP students. Single copies free.
Tadlock: ‘Why would Tampa want us?’

By Emily Wunderlich ewunderlich@mail.usf.edu
and Anna Bryson annabryson@mail.usf.edu

Rows of empty chairs lined USC Ballroom 3 as interim Regional Chancellor Kent Tadlock addressed the room.

In a bid to assure the campus that the proposal to end USF Tampa’s separate accreditation was not a power move by USF Tampa, Tadlock took his case to an audience of three students, two USF employees and three members of The Crow’s Nest at a meet-and-greet Tuesday.

“What would Tampa want us? We’re not contributing to those pre-eminence metrics. We’re not ready,” Tadlock said.

Pre-eminence is additional state funding awarded to universities that meet a set of twelve metrics — a few of which include freshman retention rates, endowment of $500 million or more and an average weighted grade point average of 4.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale for fall semester incoming freshmen.

USF Tampa met 11 out of the 12 metrics last year, which qualified it as a top-tier state school.

Previous Florida State University and the University of Florida were the only schools to meet these metrics, getting them $17.3 million per year, while USF Tampa was labeled an “emerging” pre-eminent university and received $8.7 million per year.

According to Tadlock, pre-eminent universities primarily focus on research, and while that is important at USF St. Petersburg, the university’s main priority has been “teaching and learning.”

“Pre-eminence metrics kind of changes and shifts the mission of the university,” Tadlock said.

Tadlock emphasized that “each campus would retain its current name and preserve its individual identity,” citing the fact that these concerns are in writing.

Tadlock addressed the university’s future involvement with the community.

“He is St. Petersburg. We are connected to this community intimately,” he said. “They would not want to destroy that or take that away.”

Legislators are in the process of determining the specifics of House Bill 423 — the bill that will strip USF St. Petersburg of its separate accreditation — and how they will affect students and faculty within the USF system.

Tadlock said Rep. Chris Sprosws, R-Palm Harbor, who proposed the legislation, “has a good heart.”

According to Tadlock, Sprosws wants to bring a pre-eminent university to St. Petersburg because he believes the additional funding will benefit USF St. Petersburg in the future.

“He sincerely believes we need the resources to become something bigger and better than we currently are,” Tadlock said.

Tadlock reiterated he wants USF St. Petersburg to retain its autonomy from the Tampa campus.

“We don’t want to be taken over, we don’t want to be governed by some other place across the bridge,” he said. “We don’t want to be told how we can spend our budget. We want to keep that autonomy as much as we can.”
Dear Representative Sprouls and Senator Brandes,

As Student Government Leaders at USFSP it is our responsibility to represent the Student Body in the most effective way possible. We would first like to communicate our appreciation for the continued inclusion of student input in this process.

However, it is important to note that these discussions should have occurred at the outset of any such proposal and not after. Over the past several weeks, we have worked diligently to hear the concerns of our fellow students. We represent a Student Body that is concerned, apprehensive, and confused as to what the accreditation consolidation of the USF System means for the future of this campus. Our appreciation goes to each of you, and to Chairman Lamb, for hearing the concerns of the Student Body and discussing many of the items of concern as it pertains to the academic priorities of the student population at USFSP. That being said, academics don’t make a university but the people within it. Even more important are the decisions they are empowered to make. Over the past 12+ years this institution has grown as a place known for its commitment to the community and as place where students can partake in experiential learning opportunities.

It is no secret that there has been a history of animosity and mistrust between members of the campus in St. Petersburg and administration in Tampa. As we stand at crossroads about the future of USFSP System each of you has the opportunity to make a commitment to growing and expanding this institution.

USFSP has the potential to be a unique but equally shining jewel in the crown of the Tampa Bay Region. In the lines below our Student Government has outlined in detail a number of legislative priorities and items of concern for the transition task force that are vital to not only to the culture of USFSP but serve as a benefit to the entire USF System. It is our intent that you will take these concerns to heart and use them to guide your decisions in the coming weeks.

Legislative Priorities

1. We request that the Campus Board be retained in its current authority.
2. The current structure of the Campus Board be expanded to include a student representative with voting rights.
3. Student Representation from the St. Petersburg Campus be included in the Transition Task Force that will make recommendations for the future of the USF System.
4. Leadership in the St. Petersburg Campus must be empowered to honor and continue to make commitments to sustainability (e.g. Climate Action Plan).

Items of Concern

1. A continued commitment to small class sizes and a low faculty to student ratio on the St. Petersburg Campus.
2. Local empowerment to continue campus specific programs, like the Honors College and College of Arts and Sciences.
3. Student Government authority to finance and support clubs and organizations, as well CITF, SGIF, and student fees based out of the St. Petersburg.
4. Continued development of the physical aspects of our campus with investment in new capital projects and completion of existing ones.
5. Financial and Staff support for the presence of Fraternity and Sorority life, Intercollegiate Athletics, and an Office of Research and Innovation based out of St. Petersburg.
6. A diverse and inclusive Student Body should remain at the forefront of our mission.

We believe that all current parties are working in what they believe is the best interest of the students at USFSP.

Moving forward it should be clear that if there is any suggestion or inclination that this consolidation will be used to hamper the progress at USFSP or hinder student success we will not only vocalize our opposition but use the powers vested in us by the State of Florida to actively oppose this legislation.

Thank you for your continued leadership on our campuses and in the community.

We look forward to our continued involvement in these discussions.

Signed by student body president David Thompson, senate president Emilie Morris and chief Justice Richard Marini.
**New scholarship for education majors**

By Madeline Seiberlich

The College of Education is looking to award a $5,000 scholarship to 25 students who have the potential to be student leaders. The Teacher Leader Scholarship was created to help the College of Education become more competitive with other universities such as St. Petersburg College, according to advising coordinator Dr. Deanna Bullard.

Students who receive the award will become ambassadors. They will be required to promote the student’s “potential as an outstanding educator.”

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According to Bullard, the scholarship was created to provide incentive to transfer and current students to “plant the seed” to encourage students to choose USF St. Petersburg.

Burbank and Jordan Boyer, a senior education major and scholarship recipient, will prepare informative talks for future students and attend events on campus as representatives of the College of Education.

Some defenders of the St. Petersburg campus now see Genshaft’s hand in the proposal to abolish its independent accreditation, which emerged—without warning—in the last two pages of a 52-page bill on higher education in the second week of the legislative session.

One of them is St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman, who served six years in the state House of Representatives.

“I find it very hard to believe that this came as a complete surprise to everybody involved with USF Tampa,” he said last week in an interview with WUSF Public Radio.

“Someone, whether it was the President Genshaft or the Board of Trustees, had to know that this was coming because things don’t just happen in a vacuum (in Tallahassee).”

That explanation seems likely to flame the distrust in St. Petersburg, where many campus veterans and retirees recall an unhappy era before 2006, when St. Petersburg was controlled by what retired financial administrator Herman Brames has called “the guillotine that is in Tampa.”

It also seems likely to intensify doubts about Genshaft, who in 18 years as USF system president has changed St. Petersburg campus leadership six times.

The last change came in September, when she abruptly ousted Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska for the way she handled Hurricane Irma.

Some senior professors were stunned by Genshaft’s move, which one of them—longtime history professor Ray Arsenault called a “gross overreaction” that violated due process, ignored senior faculty, ruined Wisniewska’s reputation, and threw the campus into turmoil.

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**Adjuncts begin union vote on Friday**

By Nancy McCann

Adjunct faculty on the three campuses of the USF system can finally stop chanting “let us vote.”

They learned last week that they had overcome strong objections from the USF administration to succeed in their campaign to hold a union election.

Starting Friday, the state Public Employees Relations Commission will administer the election, which will allow adjuncts from USF Tampa, USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee to vote on forming a collective bargaining unit.

Voting ends March 13.

The estimated 900 adjuncts in the USF system are part of a group around the country known as Faculty Forward, a project of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) for organizing union contracts won a raise for around 1,000 professors.

“Sixty percent of first (union) contracts won a raise of 20 percent or more for the lowest paid” and “71 percent of first contracts included professional development funds, valued at $897,500,” according to information from the USF adjunct organizational efforts on adjuncts around the country.

“When we come together and keep fighting, we win,” Tara Blackwell, a USF adjunct professor, said in a union news release. “The administration took every opportunity to delay our right to vote, but we kept speaking out for our rights and let them know we wouldn’t be silenced.”

The USF faculty will become the third group of adjuncts to hold a union election in Florida in the last year and a half.

In December, Broward Community College adjuncts voted overwhelmingly to form a union. With 1,700 potential members, the union says, it is the largest SEIU faculty unit to date.

A year earlier, Hillsborough Community College adjuncts voted for union representation for around 1,000 professors.

“Sixty percent of first (union) contracts won a raise of 20 percent or more for the lowest paid” and “71 percent of first contracts included professional development funds, valued at $897,500,” according to information about Faculty Forward contracts that was provided to The Crow’s Nest by SEIU.

Ballots will be mailed on Friday to adjuncts’ home addresses.

**USFSP Bike Share rolls out**

By Dylan Hart

**Contributor**

The USF St. Petersburg bike share kicked off Feb. 9 with an invigorating tour of downtown St. Petersburg’s murals led by local muralist Derek Donnelly.

The bike share is a new program on campus allowing students to rent bicycles for a period of time, anywhere from a day to a semester. It will be similar to canoe and kayak rentals at the boat house.

The bicycles are available at The Edge during normal hours, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

While a bike share program existed on campus several years ago, issues with bike theft and coordination led to the program’s end.

“The bikes degraded and the upkeep wasn’t funded,” said sustainability coordinator Byron Baugh. “We went from around 15 bikes to two that were in working order.”

In spring 2017, a student initiative led by the Student Green Energy Fund (SGEF) moved to fund a new bike share on campus with intent to provide environmentally friendly forms of transportation. That initiative progressed into the bike share now provided at The Edge.

The partnership of SGEF, Campus Recreation and Student Government intends to remedy previous funding issues with a specific plan to continuously fund and maintain the bike share.

To discourage theft, the bicycles bought for the bike share are more difficult to strip than the previous program’s bicycles.

Baugh praised Campus Recreation’s collective experience with bicycle maintenance.

Bikes, bike locks, helmets, bike lights and flyers that explain how to properly lock the bike will be provided.

Students must provide their USF ID to rent a bike, which will go through Campus Recreation’s point of sale software, Fusion.

Students must sign a waiver to check out a bike, accepting responsibility for injury and damage to the bicycle.

Daniel Marshall, watercraft, adventure and aquatics coordinator for Campus Recreation, said, “Ultimately, it will be the renter’s responsibility to secure the bikes properly, and it will be their responsibility if it’s stolen.”

**Roses are red, violets are blue**

National Condom Day is here for you

By Delaney Brown

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National Condom Day, an annual campaign by the Sexual Health Center at the University of South Florida, falls on Valentine’s Day each year.

The holiday was initially created in the 1980s to educate people about how condoms can help prevent the spread of HIV, a deadly immunodeficiency disease that kills thousands of Americans each year.

Now, the day serves as a reminder to engage in safe and consensual sexual practices.

Though college students have heard about the importance of using condoms to prevent pregnancy and disease since middle school, implementation of the advice is still spotty.

According the National College Health Assessment conducted in spring 2017, nearly 53 percent of USF St. Petersburg students used a male condom to prevent pregnancy the last time they had vaginal intercourse.

When asked how often they’d used a condom or other protective barriers such as a female condom or dental dam in the last 30 days, only 2.3 percent of students said always for oral sex, 12.5 percent for vaginal intercourse and 2.8 percent for anal intercourse.

“Obviously we want those numbers to say 100%,” said Victoria Beltran, Wellness Center education coordinator.

The Center for Disease Control estimates that nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections (STIs) occur each year. The majority of this number consists of people between the ages of 15-24, whom account for nearly 50 percent of all those infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, the three most common STIs, are all preventable through the use of condoms.

“At the Wellness Center, we understand that sexuality is a normal part of who we are as individuals. As you go through college, you will learn more about who you are, what you prefer, how your body works, and what you want from any type of relationship,” Beltran said.

The Wellness Center offers condoms, latex-free varieties and female condoms for free year-round. In recognition of National Condom Day, you can stop by the Wellness Center on Harborwalk, handing out safe sex supplies that may come in handy for Valentine’s Day plans.
Chocolate hearts filled with greed

By Jonah Hinebaugh
Sophomore Mass Communications Major
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The commercialized holiday has been elevated by society to the point where there is an obligatory subscription that reinforces the ploy that it is supposed to be the superior motives of the businesses behind it.

According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), Valentine's Day spending reached a record high $19.7 billion in 2016.

The reported cost averages out to approximately $147 per person.

Spendings which much in one day because you’re conditioned to point out the month long rationalization that results in nothing more than an empty wallet and a nice dinner, if you’re lucky.

While the bourgeois may have no problem flashing their wealth for this holiday, it is important to note how far removed they are from the working class.

Instead of feeding into the extravagance, I want society to empathize with the worker to remind them of the farcical reasoning behind this day.

Furthermore, Valentine’s Day reinforces the idea that the patriarchal society is affected with gender norms.

According to the NRF, men consistently spend almost $100 more than women every year between 2007 and 2016.

The expectation that a man is supposed to flex his wealth for his female significant other creates a “damsel in distress” situation, reinforcing the sexist notion that women are unable to support themselves and that men are supposed to be the breadwinners of their household.

The trivialization of women’s ability to thrive on their own terms without the help of a man is a gross misunderstanding.

It undermines all the work feminists have done to combat the demeaning and unfair system that has been in place far longer than it should have.

Likewise, the holiday solely marketing toward straight couples alienates the rest of society. Even if Valentine’s Day began to market toward the excluded groups, the attempt at equality would be a shallow one that ties back to greed.

The Valentine’s Day scheme is propaganda set forth to exploit the already-disadvantaged working class across the US. To imagine it as meaningful in any way is lying to yourself, a sort of complacent ignorance to the toxicity of capitalism that runs rampant through the country.

There is nothing wrong with spoiling a loved one, but to think it is shown through the materialist mindset that Valentine’s Day proposes is a grave misunderstanding.

The trend is not by fault of the people, but by the manipulation of corporations who only love the surplus capital they stand to gain from a faux holiday.

Love doesn’t have a color

By Brianna Rodriguez
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When I met my boyfriend, I was struck by his smile, his intelligence and his character.

As a young adult in the 21st century, dating someone from a different background didn’t seem taboo. I grew up mostly with people who came from a different background than me.

I fell in love with someone who had more to do with social realities rather than physical variations. Color is only skin-deep, while the social implications that ethnicity carry mean a lot more.

In reality, race is completely made up. It was imagined. We are all human. We may carry different DNA, but we all are created equal.

It shouldn’t matter whom you love. What matters is if you and your partner are happy.

The National Retail Federation estimates over $19 billion in total planned spending for Valentine’s Day this year.

The disapproval of some interracial couples appears to be in the media, the first thing that my boyfriend and I noticed when we started dating was the constant stares.

Some would gaze at us in awe or tell us how cute we look, while others would look at us like we were a science experiment gone wrong.

In the short time that we have been together, our physical differences have been pointed out numerous times.

While his family accepted me, my family had to learn to accept the differences in mine weren’t as tolerant.

I didn’t realize that dating someone with a different background would cause some members of my family to look at me differently.

A Timeline story called “Europeans invented the concept of race as we know it,” describes the legacy of interpreting skin color as a sign of worth.

The focus on racial lines was implemented by the bourgeoisie to distinguish themselves as superior to others, and bringing this ideology to the United States led to prejudice and racism.

A PBS story called “Origin of the Idea of Race” explains how race has more to do with social realities rather than physical characteristics. Color is only skin-deep, while the social implications that ethnicity carry mean a lot more.

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The Valentine’s Day scheme is propaganda set forth to exploit the already-disadvantaged working class across the US. To imagine it as meaningful in any way is lying to yourself, a sort of complacent ignorance to the toxicity of capitalism that runs rampant through the country.

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The trend is not by fault of the people, but by the manipulation of corporations who only love the surplus capital they stand to gain from a faux holiday.

Despite interracial couples being commonplace, physical differences are still questioned by others. What matters is if you and your partner are happy.

BRIANNA RODRIGUEZ | THE CROW’S NEST

THE CROW’S NEST

The Crow’s Nest is committed to providing its readers with news relevant to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg and its surrounding community. The Crow’s Nest abides by the highest ethical standards and focuses on stories that help readers make informed decisions on current issues. We take seriously the public’s right to access the news, and strive to uphold the highest standards of reporting as defined by The Society of Professional Journalists. Opinions in this newspaper do not necessarily represent those of the administration, faculty, or student body.
National Signing Day for the Bulls of South Florida should have students and fans beaming with excitement.

The saying “defense wins games” rings the loudest with head coach Charlie Strong, so it’s no surprise that the University of South Florida added 14 defensive players to its roster. Of those 14 players, eight are defensive linemen, so expect a lot of pressure on the opposing quarterbacks.

One of the crazy moments from the early signing period was the success of acquiring 3-star defensive end Stacy Kirby from Jones High school in Orlando.

Kirby was expected to choose University of Central Florida over USF because Orlando is closer to his home, but he said, “the players actually sold me on the Bulls.”

Defensive coordinator Brian Jean-Marie also influenced Kirby’s decision.

To counteract the departure of cornerback Deatrick Nichols, the Bulls added 3-star cornerback Jajuan Cherry and safety Keyon Helton. Both players showed grit and determination in high school, which should bode well for USF’s defense.

South Florida added 11 offensive players, including 4-star wide receiver Zion Roland.

Roland played wide receiver for Admiral Farragut Academy, as well as cornerback and return-man for kickoffs. That versatility is just what USF needs.

Quarterbacks Octavious Battle and Jordan McCloud should become big names for the Bulls. These two will be going after the starting job this fall and it’ll be interesting to see their development.

Battle is a 6-foot-3-inch, 3-star recruit who threw for 3,221 yards and had 23 touchdowns at Carver High School in Georgia. He can also rush, as he put up 713 rushing yards and scored two touchdowns as the runner.

McCloud is a Tampa native who routinely blew out opposing teams on route to a 12-2 record. The Plant High School quarterback threw for 2,966 yards and 26 touchdowns and rushed for 389 yards and six touchdowns.

While the common perception is that Battle is more of a pocket passer than a true dual-threat quarterback, he shows his explosiveness when the pocket collapses, forcing him to take off for the end zone.

Both quarterbacks have play styles similar to former quarterback Quinton Flowers. The two freshmen have cannons for arms, and can run faster than Forrest Gump when needed.

It will be interesting to see who Strong chooses as the starter.

Replacing running backs D’Ernest Johnson and Darius Tice will be no easy task, but 6-foot-2-inch, 220-pound crucisher Brian Norris out of Chiefland High School and 5-foot-8-inch sprinter Johnny Ford out of Coral Gables High School are fantastic replacements.

Norris will be able to bully his way through defensive players while Ford makes opposing defenses look like they’re standing still.

The 2018 signing class for USF should frighten opposing defenses look like they’re standing still.

The 2018 signing class for USF should frighten every team in the American Athletic Conference.

Not only is it the second best signing class in the conference, it touts players ready to stampede on Sept. 1.

Quarterback Quinton Flowers (left) leaves big shoes to fill. Incoming freshmen Octavious Battle and Jordan McCloud will look to fill them.
Rudy Francisco’s first book triumphs

By Sara M. McDonald
Contributor

Internet sensation Rudy Francisco, a Button Poetry artist made famous for his spoken word poem “Scars/To The New Boyfriend,” has finally made his written word debut.

His first book “Helium,” a culmination of some of his spoken word poetry and new pieces not yet performed, was released in November 2017 and was worth the wait. “Helium” covers a range of taboo topics such as race, politics, personal life, heartbreak and the occasional love poem (although he swears he isn’t a love poet). Francisco uses “Helium” to expose the struggles and triumphs of his own life, using witty analogies and eye-opening metaphors. He truly has a way with words that reaches out and touches people no matter their race, age or background.

One poem that truly struck me was “Strength.” In just five lines Francisco conveys a time where he convinced his fist it was a flower and forgives someone before being asked to. It’s little things like that which makes his pieces so deep and relatable.

Who hasn’t struggled with forgiveness? Who hasn’t had to hold back their anger? Who never received a much-deserved apology? In five lines Francisco related to all of those issues in an intimate way, and that is what makes him an amazing writer and poet.

The only noticeable flaw of “Helium” is its organization. The book is broken up into four sections, and it is hard to figure out what the theme is to each section. The first section seems to be Francisco examining himself. This portion of the book has pieces in the vein of “My Honest Poem” in which you’ll find lines such as “My hobbies include: being my life story, hiding behind metaphors, and trying to convince my shadows I’m someone worth following.”

The second section contains poems that are mostly centered around relationships; this is where you’ll find the popular versions of “Scars” and “To The New Boyfriend.”

The third and fourth sections contain themes that are difficult to discern. There are powerful poems tackling grueling subject matters, but the way the ending of the book is organized does not seem to have much rhyme or reason.

This is a rather small gripe with the quality and passion that is found in every single poem. There is not a complaint to be made on any of the poems themselves.

This is a poetry collection must have. “Helium” lives up to the hype that surrounded Francisco’s first book release. The author brilliantly created a collection of poems that can walk you through every stage of life.

“Helium” proves that Francisco not only has a strong voice but a strong and relatable hand.

Rich Brian’s ‘Amen’ prays for success

By Alex Eubanks
Contributor

In his debut album, Rich Brian pulled through with a well-crafted and at times introspective album. Brian Imanuel has come a long way in his music career in a short time, but his lack of experience occasionally shows through in his debut album “Amen.”

Imanuel began his music career in 2016 after a period of making YouTube videos and Vines. He originally went by the stage name Rich Chigga and began receiving success off the viral hit track, “Dat Stick.” Since then, Imanuel has developed rapidly and changed his stage name to the less controversial Rich Brian, but his success hasn’t dipped in preparation for his anticipated debut album.

The album starts off with the title track “Amen.” The track has an infectious bassline and he sounds great riding the beat.

The next two tracks are also excellently constructed with “Occupied” standing out as a phenomenal track. Imanuel comes through with some of his more interesting bars on the track, dropped over an interesting and quirky electronic beat.

“Introvert,” a collaborative track with fellow YouTube personality Filthy Frank now known as Joji, is a quality track. I was blown away by the fact that Joji could sing and it shows on the hook.

“Glow Like Dat,” a single for the album, is another great track and Imanuel has one of his best lines, “Being on my Mac Demarco shit / Break my heart and smoke a cig / and the beat shines through.”

“Trespass” is another standout track, with Imanuel switching it up and talking about not wanting to deal with people who use him for his fame. The three-track run of “See Me,” “Flight” and “Enemies” ushers in a lull as Imanuel mellowes out, with “Enemies” being the only track of the three that was memorable.

He snaps out of the subdued interlude with “Kitty,” which is one of the funniest damn songs I’ve ever heard. Like a smash-hit crossover between J.Cole’s “Wet Dreams” and “The Hangover,” Imanuel details the first time he had sex.

In “Kitty,” the underaged rapper details going out to a bar with a few friends, but unfortunately he forgot his fake I.D. and couldn’t get anything, but still manages to go home with a girl – who just so happens to be one of his friends’ sister.

The closing of the album is a low point as two of the last three tracks feature a very generic pop hook and a knock off Chris Brown performing the chorus.

The outlier of the three is “Chaos,” my favorite of the singles he put out. When paired with Imanuel’s middling performance on “Little Prince,” the final three tracks are passable at best.

“Amen” sets a solid foundation for Imanuel to continue his career, and will serve as a springboard to continue capitalizing on his fame. I only see Imanuel improving from here on out – his production and rapping skills can only become better with time.