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Loved ones remember a ‘humble, everyday hero’

Dhimitri Andoni, then 18, and his cousin Kristiana Nasto, then 18, attended the same high school together in Albania and then both moved to the United States for college. “He kept trying to convince me to switch my campus from USF Tampa to USFSP,” Nasto said. “He would say that the view from his campus was just priceless.”

By Anna Bryson

and Whitney Elfstrom

When Dhimitri Andoni saw a distressed motorist in the median along Interstate 275 on Sept. 20, he pulled over to help.

That’s the kind of “humble, everyday hero” he was, said his cousin, Kristiana Nasto. “Humility and selflessness were just a big part of him.”

That selflessness cost him his life.

As Andoni, 22, a finance major at USF St. Petersburg, walked back to his car after checking on the other motorist, a passing pickup truck struck and killed him, the Florida Highway Patrol says.

Last week, as Andoni’s family – immigrants from Albania – struggled to cope with their loss, they remembered their son, brother and cousin as “the human form with her provocative series “Blue Nudes.” Check out what the exhibit entailed and what’s next for Jadus.

ARTS, page 4

EXPOSING IT ALL

Artist Carrie Jadus seeks to explore the small town of Zicisht, Albania, where Dhimitri was a happy and energetic young man who embraced life as a USF St. Petersburg student and dreamed of a career as an accountant. He loved to play soccer and chess with his father, Petrika Andoni, as well as computer games. He finished elementary school and middle school in Bilisht, Albania, and attended a private high school, Preca College, in Korca, Albania.

“I was so excited when both of us were accepted in the same high school because that meant that we would spend all our high school years together,” said Nasto, 22. “All our professors highly respected him, and his many academic achievements made his parents very proud. I cherish all our high school memories together, like all the times he saved me from horrible dates or all the times he boosed after I tried to sing in after-parties. Yes, I sing horribly.”

Silvio Bedalla was one of Dhimitri’s high school friends.

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TRANSPARENT OR OPAQUE?

Under a new policy, all Student Government communications must be overseen by its director of media relations. Here’s why that policy is raising questions among student journalists.

By Nancy McCann

Contributor

Major changes and changing majors

Menlo to students: It’s about to get a lot harder to change your major.

USF St. Petersburg faculty learned at a campus forum last week that undergraduates are now expected to complete their degrees in four years, and requests by students to change majors will be approved only if the four-year timeline can be met.

Students adding a second major or a minor will also be held to a four-year completion plan. The policy does not apply to students working on a second bachelor’s degree.

“This puts a new burden on freshman orientation,” said Demi Elliott, chair of the Department of Journalism and Digital Communication. “There will have to be a lot of one-on-one counseling.”

This “student progression” policy has been in effect at USF Tampa since 2013, but it had not been put into practice at USF St. Petersburg.

Suddenly, however, the dynamics are different. The Legislature abolished the St. Petersburg campus’ separate accreditation last spring and ordered it returned to the control of Tampa. The consolidation of the three campuses of the USF system does not become official until 2020, but notable changes already have begun.

Freshman admissions standards at USF St. Petersburg were raised this summer and fall, at least in part because of consolidation.

Tuition and promotion policies for faculty are under scrutiny, and so are academic programs across the three campuses and the general education requirements for students in all majors.

>> SEE CHANGES on P3

NEWS, page 3

NO TIME FOR CRIME

The University Police Department released its annual crime and safety report. See which crimes occur the most often and how you can take extra steps to protect yourself.

Majors

Students in all majors.

Digital Communication. “There will have to be a lot of one-on-one counseling.”

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>> SEE CHANGES on P3
Students find natural stress relief in CBD

By Rachel Freeman

One experience that unites almost every college student across the country’s stress.

Most students have felt the pressure, tension and anxiety that school can cause.

In the wake of new supplement stores opening in the Tampa Bay area that sell CBD, students at USF St. Petersburg are starting to use the natural remedy to combat the stress that comes along with classes, work and relationships.

CBD, or cannabidiol, is a non-psychoactive compound found in the cannabis plant. In March, the World Health Organization found it safe for human and animal consumption, with “no evidence of recreational use or any public health-related problems associated with the use of pure CBD.”

The WHO reported that CBD could be helpful in treating Alzheimer’s Disease, cancer, Parkinson’s Disease and epilepsy, among other ailments.

Allyson Capati, a sophomore computer science major, first learned about CBD online three years ago. “I was just casually surfing the internet and I stumbled upon some articles talking about it,” she said. According to Marshall, CBD is a great option for students who are looking for a natural stress remedy.

“Our biggest warning for people is that if you happen to take a large dose, you may feel sleepy,” Marshall said. “You are totally able to function, drive, work, talk or go to class while using it.”

Capati said she first tried CBD last summer when she was experiencing pain in her ankle. “It quickly helped take the pain away,” she said. “I also felt really sleepy since I took a bit more than the recommended dose.”

Now, Capati only takes higher doses of CBD to help her sleep. “It’s an easy way to get to sleep and calm down,” she said. When Capati is looking to relieve anxiety and tension, she takes a smaller dose.

“I’m completely stressed and I tend to overthink a lot. Often times when I’m stressed, I take CBD so I can get back on track with what I’m doing,” said Zoe Lynn McLane, a recent mass communications graduate from USF St. Petersburg, also used CBD as a stress reliever.

“When I take CBD, it clears my mind of everything. All of the negative thoughts go out of my head and I feel very relaxed,” McLane said.

Another method of CBD use is inhalation or vaping. According to Marshall, CBD inhalation is more of a quick, situational remedy for anxiety instead of a everyday stress relief method.

Marshall recommends that students who have test taking anxiety could try hitting a CBD vape pen a few times before going to class.

CBD also comes in edible forms, such as capsules or gummy snacks. Topical CBD creams are also available and can help with pain or inflammation.

While the World Health Organization recognizes that there are no known risks associated with using CBD, Marshall said that it’s best to go slow and keep track of the way you feel as you experiment with different intake methods and doses.

“Just do your research, ask questions, and don’t always go with the cheapest option,” Marshall said. “If you happen to jump online after reading this and find a huge bottle labelled ‘CBD oil’ for an insanely low price, it’s probably too good to be true.”

Marshall is available at Dr. Feel Good CBD Superstore to answer any questions about using CBD. Follow the store on social media at @doctorfeelgood_sp on Instagram and Dr. Feel Good on Facebook.

Dr. Feel Good CBD Superstore sells an assortment of CBD products, including oils and gummies.

By Rachel Freeman

Dhimitri’s classmates from his advanced corporation finance class put flowers where Dhimitri was one for us,” said Bedulla in a Facebook message to The Crow’s Nest reporter. “He was that person who makes you laugh and brings joy in your day. He used to take everything in his life with optimism. He knew how to live in the present and enjoy every moment of it. He used to make a lot of jokes. He was a hell of a video gamer too.”

After graduating from high school in 2014, Dhimitri decided to move to Germany to continue his passion for car racing. For one year, he learned German and explored almost all of western Europe.

After a year in Germany, his family decided to move to the U.S. for more educational and career opportunities for Dhimitri.

He enrolled at St. Petersburg College, worked as a cashier at Publix, then worked at Wells Fargo and at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. He began scuba diving and conducting marine biology research.

“The underwater world became his passion,” Nasto said. Dhimitri went on scuba-diving trips in the Florida Keys, the Bahamas and Mexico.

But his true love was still accounting, Nasto said. He enrolled at USF St. Petersburg in summer 2017 to pursue a major in finance.

Andoni tried to persuade his cousin Nasto to transfer from USF Tampa to USF St. Petersburg, saying that the view from campus was priceless.

The night he was killed, Andoni had just left his advanced corporation finance class at the Kate Tiedemann College of Business.

He was driving home along I-275 around Fifth Avenue N when he stopped to check the tire pressure on his car. The tire went out of control and landed in the median, the Highway Patrol said.

As Andoni was returning to his car, a 1996 Ford F-150 pickup truck driven by Dana Thomas Byrd, 30, struck and killed Andoni before it came to rest in the median, the Highway Patrol said.

Byrd got out of his truck, walked over to Andoni, and “after patting him, stole his 2015 Hyundai sedan and fled.”

Andoni’s father used a GPS tracker to trace the car and called authorities. When they investigated the abandoned car, the video from the GoPro on the dashboard showed what had happened.

Meanwhile, a road ranger for the Florida Department of Transportation who investigated the abandoned pickup truck along I-275 also discovered Andoni’s body.

Byrd was arrested Sept. 21 on charges of grand theft auto and leaving the scene of a crash involving a death. Bail was set at $100,000.

According to Pinellas County records, Byrd has been arrested 16 other times since 2005 on charges ranging from domestic battery to neglect of a child.

Marina Schmidt is the professor who teaches the class that Andoni attended shortly before he was killed.

“I just can’t believe he wasn’t there for the rest of the semester,” she said. “He was there every time, always on time, a really nice student. He was a very bright young man and he had just a fabulous future in front of him.”

Last week, Andoni’s classmates paid tribute to him by placing flowers on the empty desk where he sat.

“Dhimitri planned to graduate in spring 2019,” said his cousin Nasto. “But I guess this December I will graduate for us both.”

THE CROW’S NEST
THE CROW’S NEST

Understanding the annual crime report

By Amy Diaz
amydiaz@mail.usf.edu

The USF St. Petersburg campus police department recently issued the Annual Security and Fire Safety Report for the 2018–2019 school year.

The report lists total numbers of crimes reported from 2015 through 2017 by the University Police Department, campus security authorities and other law enforcement agencies.

It lists what if at first may appear to be three rapes in 2017, but were actually two.

The report shows that one occurred in a residential area, one on campus and one on public property.

University Police Chief David Hendry said that “campus” encompasses the residence halls, so there was one rape on the USF St. Petersburg campus, not two.

The rape that occurred on campus was filed through the Title IX process, which allows victims or accusers to report and handle the situation with privacy. In this case, the survivor chose not to report the incident to UPD.

CHANGES, continued from P1

Meanwhile, a consultant hired to evaluate campus consolidation has released preliminary recommendations that would convert the Colleges of Business and Education in St. Petersburg into less prestigious roles.

“This is a merger, or a hospitalization,” said the Tampa Bay Times editor on an editorial about Friday.

Changing majors

As word of the new policy on changing majors spread on the St. Petersburg campus, some faculty groused privately that the change will cramp students’ flexibility and might even compel some to transfer.

“Don’t go overboard about this concept,” said Rebecca Johns, an associate professor of geography and coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Program, said the change concerns her.

She said the policy, like the policy that charges students extra tuition once they go over a certain number of credits, discourages intellectual curiosity and academic exploration, she said.

“You could be the victim of a sexual assault, be the survivor, and you say, ‘Well, I don’t want to report it to the police. And, you know, why’s this?’” Hendry said.

According to Atchley, “Campus police are really to be published and distributed under the Jeannette Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Police and Crime Statistics Act signed in 1990. It is also known as the Clery Act.

The act came about when 19-year-old Jeannette Clery was raped and murdered in her dorm room in New Castle, Pennsylvania in 1986.

The college had several reports of dorm rooms being broken into by other students prior to Clery’s death, but the information wasn’t shared with students or parents.

Clery’s parents felt that campus crime was not sufficiently reported and worked to improve the system so universities would require students to disclose information regarding crime statistics on or off campus.

Even though the two instances of rape on the USF St. Petersburg annual report did not lead to investigations or arrests through the campus police, they are required to report the names to keep students and parents aware of the incidents that occur.

“It’s really designed as a crime prevention tool and as a transparent education tool,” Hendry said. “We report not only the activities that are specifically on campus, but also those that are in the area of campus.”

“So of course, we’re in an urban setting, we’re in the downtown, we have lots of folks that travel between here and there,” he said. “The sidewalk is considered public property. And that public property domain goes out a few blocks. And so we have to categorize all of the activity that occurs in the area of campus.”

The report includes explanations of university policies and procedures and how to report a crime. There are also appendices that show a map of the jurisdiction of the USF St. Petersburg police and offer specific crime and incident definitions.

Students can obtain a paper copy of this report by calling University Police at (727) 873-4444 or visiting their office.

The Crow’s Nest

Regional Chancellor Martin Tadlock led a campus forum Tuesday afternoon regarding future changes due to consolidation.

October 1, 2018

MARTHA RHINE | THE CROW’S NEST

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"Blue Nudes" examines the power of the human form

By Amy Diaz
amydiaz@mail.usf.edu

In nearly any other circumstance, being naked in front of your boss would be inappropriate, scandalous and weird. But when your boss is the owner of an art studio and needs models for an exhibition, it’s just part of the job.

Carrie Jadus presented the second installment of her “Blue Nudes” series Friday night at Soft Water Studios, 515 22nd St. S.

The event was organized by USF St. Petersburg graduate and assistant gallery manager Bailey Gumienny. She was also one of Jadus’ models.

“I didn’t feel weird. And I knew that she was looking for light, she was looking for composition,” Gumienny said of her first experience modeling for an artist. “And you know, I’m around her a lot. We’re pretty close.”

The series consisted of 23 nude studies, varying in size and shape. The pieces fit and flowed together across one wall of the studio, tied by the same turquoise background, gold frame and peachy-pink skin color. The exhibition told a collective story of the human form, each piece honoring a different body in a different pose.

“She doesn’t really define the faces. She usually omits them or they’re kind of abstracted,” Gumienny said of Jadus’ series. “It’s not really about the expression, it’s about the shape and the movement.

Each body lies, sits, stands, kneels, crouches, leans or stretches in a different way. Their positions and gestures convey different emotions and motivations even without defined facial expressions. One figure holds her head in what seems to be anguish, frustration and sorrow.

Another kicks her legs up, one crossed over the other, dancing and soaking up the sun.

The inspiration for the “Blue Nudes” came from a figure drawing session in which Jadus participated. Instead of sketching the figure, Jadus decided to paint during the longer poses to use up leftover oil paint on her pallette. She prepped her paper with bright colors before the class so she could paint the figures on top of them, and found she loved the contrast of the bright blue background and the warm tones of the skin.

“These have been developing for about a year,” Jadus said of the second installment of work presented at the exhibit. “The Blue Nudes have kind of evolved over the years. So these two works were a lot different from these, they were a lot maybe, less developed.”

The first installment of the “Blue Nudes” series was presented in 2016, and became a continuing signature project for Jadus.

“I spent more time on this series because the blue backgrounds became sort of an insignia of mine and something I become really comfortable with using,” she said. “And so over the years, it’s just really evolved.”

Close to 100 artists and art lovers showed up for the event wearing any blue clothing they owned, drinking champagne dyed blue with food coloring, and snacking on Hershey’s kisses in blue wrappers.

There were magnets of the “Blue Nudes” for sale and 12 of the 23 art pieces in the series were sold.

The pieces that weren’t sold will remain at the studio and become part of a group exhibition titled “S I N U O S I T Y: The Human Landscape” opening Oct. 13 during the Second Saturday Art Walk from 5 to 9 p.m.

The show will feature 13 artists, including Gumienny. The art will explore the power of the human form, but will be diverse as far as technique and style with each artist.

The exhibition is free to the public and will end Nov. 1 with a closing ceremony.

Story Days in Tampa Bay: A powerful week of storytelling

By Kelli Carmack

Your Real Stories Inc. is a local organization dedicated to promoting storytelling through theater, dance, poetry and various other mediums. They call it theatrical journalism.

Lillian Dunlap, co-founder of Your Real Stories, attributes many factors to her starting the organization. With a background in television reporting, Dunlap said she never really had time to actually listen to people’s stories due to intense deadlines. Dunlap also worked as a diversity coach and consultant in places like the United Kingdom, which she says helped her grow tremendously as a storyteller.

“It gave me a lot of information on how people feel and how they resonate … I’m convinced that you cannot have an excellent story without adhering to the principles of diversity,” Dunlap said.

One of Your Real Stories most highly anticipated events is its annual week-long festival, “Story Days in Tampa Bay,” which won the 2017 Creative Loafing award for Best Mix of Theatre, Storytelling and Activism.

This year’s “Story Days” run from Oct. 1 - 6. There will be a total of 12 events throughout the week, including:

Irina & Maria: Hurricane Stories, One Year Later
This event will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 2 at the Poynter Institute.
We all remember the fear and tragedy caused by hurricanes Irina and Maria, and Your Real Stories Inc. is letting people talk about just that. Jabe Sheldon, co-founder of Your Real Stories and the main event programmer of “Story Days,” says she’s most excited for this event.

“We’ve been given the opportunity to hear the stories of people who have experienced these hurricanes … and I think it’s important for people to hear,” Sheldon said.

Short Film Screening
The Visual Narrative, The Dal Museum, 1 Dali Blvd., will host this event from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 3. Tampa Bay Times photojournalists will screen their films for their series: “Everyday Tampa Bay.”

Stories, Poetry & Motion
This event will take place on Oct. 4 at 5 p.m. at the Museum of Fine Arts, 255 Beach Dr. NE.
Published author and poet Gloria Munoz’s poetry will be showcased through dance by performers. Munoz says it was the use of image, sound and rhythm that drew her into poetry.

The themes in Munoz’s featured poems at the event will range from the female body to feminism and what it means to be “an other” Munoz believes “Story Days” is absolutely crucial to St. Petersburg.

“It does an incredible job of getting different people together, and I think it’s really about the shape and the movement. It’s not really about the expression or the body,” she said.

Artist and owner of Soft Water Studios Carrie Jadus presented the second installment of her “Blue Nudes” series Friday.

The Blue Nudes are a signature project for Jadus. The art will feature 13 artists, including Gumienny. The art will explore the power of the human form, but will be diverse as far as technique and style with each artist.

The exhibition is free to the public and will end Nov. 1 with a closing ceremony.

Author and poet, Gloria Munoz, will have her work transformed from written word to dance at the Stories, Poetry & Motion event at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg.
Real talk on fake news: Empowering students

By Martha Rhine
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Family, friends, music and Beyoncé.
Those are the things that inspire Brandon Brown. But it was his passion for activism and a conversation with a former colleague that encouraged him to conceive the idea of a workshop to help college students transform from media consumers to social issue advocates.

Around 18 people participated in The Real Impact of Fake News, an event held by the Office of Multicultural Affairs at USF St. Petersburg’s University Student Center on Sept. 24.

From the start, Brown explained that the talk would not be a presentation, but rather an interactive opportunity for students to partake in dialogue with others, using the facts and prompts provided.

“I don’t have all the answers,” said Brown, a Howard University doctoral student. “I’m not here to talk at you, I’m here to facilitate a workshop.”

Participants were welcomed into a viewing area where they had the opportunity to absorb statistical information posted on the walls and watch a brief video, which addressed racism, police brutality, sexual harassment and immigration.

The information challenged common misconceptions as presented by various facets of the media from news to advertising. This interactive time led into a larger discussion on the themes presented.

“The media is a capitalist industry,” said graduate student Flore Septimus during a discussion on media literacy. “It’s all a money game.”

Tristen Johnson, OMA’s assistant director, also commented on the brief attention certain headlines get.

“Topics make headlines and then go away. Flint still doesn’t have clean water,” she said and was met with snaps from everyone present.

Key questions ranged from threats on the media perpetuated by President Trump’s criticism in tweets and public appearances to media literacy and making advocacy a lifestyle, not a trend.

They emphasized tools such as listening, practicing productive dialogue and showing up without burning out.

Those present at the workshop were treated to cookies, coffee and tea. The dimly lit room created a comfortable, relaxed environment where participants sat at round tables adorned with white tablecloths, flowers and candlelight.

Several people lingered to chat at the end, and overall reactions were positive. Angelica Rodriguez thought it was all very well put together and enjoyed the topics.

“All were equally important,” she said. Brown is enrolled in Howard’s Higher Education Leadership & Policy Studies program.

“My work centers around creating access and empowering disenfranchised communities, specifically those comprised of people of color and low-income populations,” he said in an email to The Crow’s Nest.

Brown hopes his work can provide clarity on advocacy work and engagement.

“Most people are not apathetic, they just aren’t informed,” he wrote, which is why he enjoys these workshops – challenging movers and shakers to evolve from hashtags to truly change the narrative.

Long-awaited Move It program comes to Studio B

By James Bennett III
Contributor

After months of preparation and the expenditure of a $30 thousand budget, the “Move It” program finally made its debut Friday.

“Move It,” which originated in the United Kingdom, is an interval-based group fitness class that goes beyond an average gym routine.

Instead of isolating one muscle group, it follows a functional training doctrine that stresses the importance of multiple movement patterns.

In a series of 45-second intervals, attendants follow a varying circuit of zones that focus on lifting, movement, function, core, cardio and recovery.

So far the program is exclusive to USF St. Petersburg and Florida State University.

The process of bringing “Move It” to USF St. Petersburg was initiated by Al Gentilini, associate director of Campus Recreation, and Natalie Szocs, former fitness programming coordinator.

Casey Plaza, assistant director of Campus Recreation, stepped in to fill Szocs’ shoes after her recent departure and helped implement the program with Gentilini.

They intend to promote campus involvement by bringing faculty and students together in a fitness-based environment.

Classes begin with a warm-up, and students are partnered into small groups of two to three people.

They are then assigned to one of five workout stations, where they focus on one movement, such as lifting, squatting or running, before a 15-second break where they transition to their next station.

An additional rest station is provided where students are able to catch their breath.

After the six stations are completed, students take a break to discuss what is or isn’t helping them reach their fitness goals.

The instructor then amplifies, maintains or regresses the movements before students hop back in.

Equipped with an arsenal of different exercises, instructors have the capacity to make each class unique.

Matt Main, who coached the demo class, demonstrated the program’s flexibility with a previously formed template that focused on lifting, core strength and cardio.

When it was time for the class to huddle and discuss how their workouts were going, they prioritized abs and legs for the next session, so Main adjusted the circuit to reflect their needs.

Although many students joked that the rest area was their favorite zone to spend time at, the elevated planks and core momentum trainers proved to be the most sweat-inducing exercises of the demo class.

“What’s cool about the (program) is that we cater to all fitness levels, so if it’s your first day in the gym you’re gonna be fine, and if you’re a pro athlete we’ll make sure you get a good workout in,” Main said.

Although there are no future classes scheduled, students and faculty are encouraged to watch for announcements on USF St. Petersburg’s Campus Recreation social media sites.

Campus Recreation plans on scheduling two classes during weekdays and one on weekends.

Maximum capacity is 12 people per class, but may be raised to 15 depending on involvement.

Similar to CrossFit, USF St. Petersburg’s new “Move It” program is combining different exercises to bring you a fun, personalized and varied workout.
This is a shocking assault on one of the most precious protections Floridians, students and reporters have to ensure public officials are held accountable. It cannot be tolerated.

I was outraged to read in the Sept. 24 issue of The Crow’s Nest that, under Kelso’s ridiculous policy, every member of Student Government, except Kelso and Vice President Yasiris Jordan, must go through its spokesperson during business hours when speaking to reporters.

That makes Kelso’s administration less accessible than any Student Government president in my tenure at USF St. Petersburg. That makes his administration less accessible than the City of St. Petersburg, Tampa and the university’s administration, who routinely make time to speak to reporters, often outside of business hours.

Current and former university spokespersons were available all day by email and cellphone. I should know. As the newspaper’s former managing editor, a Tampa Bay Times and WUSF Public Radio intern, I often relied on these people at all hours of the day. University professors also routinely made time to speak to reporters, even without permission or direction from the communications department.

Unlike other governments, the one on our campus does not publish press releases and elected officials rarely make public announcements or town hall meetings. That makes The Crow’s Nest one of the only ways to get information, without having to dredge through unorganized agendas and other documents.

So what’s Kelso’s poor excuse? Uniformity.

That’s according to Jon Rowles, Kelso’s chief of staff. Apparently, without a communications director, Student Government would be “less effective in its constituencies.”

Here’s what he told Crow’s Nest Managing Editor Emily Wunderlich last week: “Let’s say there wasn’t a (communications director),” Rowles said. “Everybody that you talk to would be giving you different responses. This way it’s uniform, it’s the same.”

Does Rowles mean to say members of his administration are too stupid to give accurate information, or is he implying that the officials I trust to manage campus affairs should do everything Kelso says?

The extent to which this administration stifles access and information from reporters better represents a private corporation, not a government body.

If Kelso and administrators are willing to stupidly restrain a Crow’s Nest reporter’s ability to inform the campus, what else is he willing to do?

I am terrified even imagine. If Kelso and his administration has any respect for transparency, and his communication coordinator to know what he’s up to, he will rescind this policy immediately.

Editor’s Note: This letter was also sent to university Student Government officials.
Library roof plays host to endangered birds
By Dinorah Prevost
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For 20 years, a colony of endangered seabirds have made the roof of the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library their seasonal home. Their spring home, if you will. Hidden from the view of the busy campus below, the Least Terns nest annually on the roof, but earlier last year, that home was under threat.

In spring 2017, the library’s roof needed to be redone. “The Poynter Library needed a new roof surface on it because it got to the end of its life span. It lasted about 20, 25 years so it was time to be renewed,” said Edward Lewis, USF St. Petersburg construction project manager.

Meanwhile, its resident Tern colony was beginning to arrive, and construction would have prevented its nesting season. Least Terns are a type of shorebird that breed from March through September. Florida’s beaches are their traditional nesting habitat, but they also use flat, gravel-covered rooftops, such as the library’s roof.

So rather than disrupt the Terns, Lewis halted construction for months to allow them to nest. “I met with the guys from (the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) and we spoke about the possibility of incorporating into the re-roofing project … an artificial beach (for the Terns),” Lewis said. “The Terns had traditionally nested on that building, as they had along a couple of the other (buildings on campus).”

The re-roofing was postponed until late September 2017 and completed this spring. The southwest corner of the library’s roof houses the Terns’ artificial habitat, which has a tar and gravel surface.

“They felt the southwest corner seemed to be where the Terns favored the roof because they’re quite small and they actually land and nest in amongst the stones (gravel) and they use it as cover,” Lewis said.

Jeff Liechty, Audubon Florida’s rooftop coordinator for the Tampa Bay area, monitors all area rooftop nesting, including the Poynter Library’s roof. He said Least Terns are a threatened species because they are losing their beach habitats to humans.

“Rooftop nesting came about when the Terns found quiet gravel rooftops offered a safer place to raise their young than the busy beaches,” Liechty said. ”It is a reaction by the local Tern population to human development and its disturbance to … the open sandy beaches that are prized by beach-goers. Approximately half of the Least Terns in Florida now nest on gravel rooftops.”

Least Terns started nesting on rooftops in the 1950s, but those habitats are also being phased out.

“Unfortunately, many of these gravel rooftops are being replaced with alternative materials that are not suitable to the Least Terns, so they are slowly being pushed out of this alternative nesting habitat as well as their preferred beaches,” Liechty said. A minor inconvenience to housing a colony of birds on a roof is increased bird dropings on sidewalks and parking lots nearby, according to Audubon Florida.

Lewis recently checked to see if the Terns returned to nest this year after the re-roofing. “I went up there (with FWC officials) probably about two months ago… and had a look and there was a Tern activity. And we saw them buzzing around up there so the colony is still in existence,” Lewis said.

The next stage is that we have a camera up there that will monitor them going up there.” He’ll place the camera before March when the terns start their migration to the Arctic.

“It was really to keep the environment for them. Once they’re up there, they’re not really a bother to anyone,” Lewis said. “We don’t even share the space on the roof, it’s theirs.”
Local artist Bekky Beukes talked about chaos at CreativeMornings. The event is held each month with a different guest speaker to bring the St. Petersburg creative community together.

Tara Segall, CreativeMornings host and chapter founder, yearned for a CreativeMornings chapter in St. Petersburg after attending one in Atlanta.

“Tara is very excited to see the chapter here,” said Wytona Bouwens, a senior graphic design major. “She is really disappointed on a personal level because I wanted to attend.”

Segall waited for about a year for one to start, but when it didn’t happen, she decided to start it herself. She spoke about possibly starting a CreativeMornings “happy hour” for those who prefer to visit the event at night.

The next CreativeMornings event will again take place at Station House at 8 a.m. Oct. 26. The guest speaker will be Kathleen Taylor, who will lead a discussion about honesty.

For more information visit: https://creativemornings.com/cities/sp