

GAU bargains for full coverage health care, transparent contracts

ASRC attendance policy put in to question



In the first bargaining session with administration, Graduate Assistants United makes a case for stronger compensation. ORACLE PHOTO/ALYSSA STEWART



Alyssa Stewart

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Last year, a Graduate Assistant (GA), who prefers to remain anonymous for fear of losing educational opportunities, was reassured that their grant funding would be secured even after their professor/advisor resigned from the university. After not being paid for three weeks, they were informed that this was in fact not the case.

"I was given the impression that my contract would continue until July 2020, this was even as late as May of 2018 that I was told this," the anonymous GA said. "In the middle of August, I noticed that

my paycheck was short, so when I inquired about it, I realized that I had been working for free.

"The professor never told me that my position had been terminated."

USF-Graduate Assistants United (GAU), the union representing USF's GAs, is trying to prevent situations like this from happening again. The GAU is made up of about 350-400 members who help bargain the GA contract every three years on behalf of the 2,000 GAs on campus.

Last Friday afternoon, the GAU and university officials held their first collective bargaining meeting with administration, in which they presented their preferred changes for their new contract.

USF administration will hold multiple sessions with the GAU over the next couple of months to finalize the new contract before the current one expires in August.

The next meeting does not yet have a date assigned but will be in

February or March of this year. It will include USF's response and continued negotiations.

About 40 GAU members surrounded the perimeter of the bargaining room sporting red, blue and green "With Love, Graduate Assistants United" shirts to show their support. Within the circle were two tables opposing each other with the GAU bargaining council on one side and USF's general counsel on the other.

The GAU presented a number of changes from wage increases to maternity/paternity leave. However, the two most heavily discussed topics were about contract notification deadlines and health care coverage.

Section 23.2 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement states, "Employees serving in at least one (1) semester appointment during an academic year shall be provided with a letter of intent regarding

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Leda Alvim

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Allegations regarding Activity and Service Fee Recommendation Committee (ASRC) attendance at the Nov. 26 Student Government (SG) Senate meeting took ASRC leadership by surprise.

Sen. Samuel Camilo brought up to the Senate what he believed was an issue regarding ASRC member absences during department tours, claiming they should be held accountable. While seeking transparency among the Senate and ASRC, Camilo claimed that attendance was not taken during the department tours.

Amid Camilo's claims, Yusuf Fattah, ASRC CFO and vice chair, said that attendance during department tours are supplemental for committee members, which means that they are not mandatory.

In addition, Fattah said that he wasn't told beforehand that ASRC attendance would be discussed during Senate and Camilo should have sought other channels before presenting it to Senate.

"There's only one person right

now in this room qualified to speak on ASRC and that's me," Fattah said. "Second of all, to address a point that quite honestly came for my character and the chair's character, the reason we have not reported the percentages yet is because we have only met three times.

"What we are going to do is take a look at who attended tours, because we do have a mental record of who attended tours. We also have every single excusal for members not coming to tours. And we do have the attendance records from those first three meetings, and we will be going to be emailing these people to sit down with me, Travis and Gary and discuss."

Camilo said that the reason why he did not communicate with either the chair or the vice chair of ASRC was that he wanted transparency with the Senate.

"I want people to be held accountable," Camilo said. "It's not like I'm not going to try to VOC (vote of confidence) anyone. I'm not trying to have allegations on anyone. I'm just trying to have transparency between ASRC and the Senate. And I don't see anything wrong with that.

"I do have records of what I saw, the people that I saw. It's what I see with my own eyes with people who were not there. So that's factual."

Camilo declined an interview with The Oracle to clarify his

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SG

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stance.

In an email to ASRC, Chair of ASRC Travis McCloskey reinforced that tours are a supplementary service and it was created to provide a forum to committee members to ask questions.

"The intention behind providing [department tours] was to inform members of the committee an opportunity to meet the department leadership and learn more about how departments operate," McCloskey wrote in the email addressed to ASRC. "Since some of these tours were outside normal ASRC hours, there was

no way we could fairly require those to attend every single one. Hence, Yusuf and I did not track attendance."

To avoid further discrepancies with attendance, Fattah said in an interview with The Oracle that the committee members are required to comply and sign a contract with outlined expectations for both the ASRC chair and vice chair as well as the overall committee members.

A verbal agreement was used for past ASRC meetings, however, this is the first year in which a written contract has been used, according to Fattah.

The contract, created by McCloskey and Fattah, imposed a system of accountability that will be used in the spring semester

in order to track the attendance of committee members. The system will be used and tracked by the vice chair, which records attendance based on percentage.

ASRC members are required to comply with an 85 percent minimum attendance during meetings throughout the year. In case a committee member falls below an 80 percent attendance, then it would lead to a meeting with Student Government Advising and Training Office's (SGATO) director, Gary Manka. Anything below 75 percent will be notified to Senate, where it will be decided, based on a VOC, whether the committee member should be expelled from ASRC.

An Excel sheet will be used to keep track of the attendance



To avoid further discrepancies with attendance, ASRC implemented a written contract agreement for the first time. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

points throughout the semester. A box titled 'total time ASRC has been in session' will be created where it will have all the committee members' names on it. Then, the duration of each break will be recorded as a percentage next to each member's name.

Excused absences, as well as unexcused, will also be

accounted for in the percentage, according to Fattah.

"There were definitely feelings of confusion and feelings of I guess going behind people's backs because a big sentiment that was brought up a lot on the recording was why he did not talk to the chair and vice chair beforehand," Fattah said.

GAU

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continuation or non-continuation of employment for the subsequent Fall semester by April 30, if practicable. A final letter of appointment, if necessary, shall be provided to the employee by June 30, if practicable." This was the case for the anonymous GA. They expressed that they subsequently received their non-continuation of employment letter in August which was after the June 30 deadline.

The issue for the GAU lies within the wording of the contract. The bargaining council considers the words 'if practicable' to be an "abuse of the language."

"We have had a number of issues with contracts not being delivered on time so we would like to avoid any issues by making sure the contract is delivered before the GA's start date," USF-GAU Co-President Patrick Templeton said in an interview with The Oracle. "The issue is the language because it gives

the university the freedom to not meet those deadlines because they have some ambiguity with it"

As a resolution, the GAU proposed removing 'if practicable' from the contract to ensure that strict deadlines are being set.

"If a student doesn't get the contract by June 30, there needs to be a process in which the university has to notify them with status as to why they haven't received it," Templeton said. "Right now, there is nothing for that. Not only is the deadline soft, but the university doesn't have to give you any information about the notice."

The GAU is also seeking better health insurance coverage from the university, which only partially covers health costs.

The USF Student Health Insurance Plan covers a premium up to \$2,410 for independents and \$2,569 for dependents, according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

This past academic year, the GAs had to pay out of pocket for

health care expenses for the first time, according to Templeton. This included a one-time fee of \$159 to enroll in health insurance through the university.

The GAU is bargaining for the health care to be 100 percent covered.

"It was a sudden expense for a lot of GAs, especially for our international students or our GAs who have kids," Templeton said. "That's money that doesn't just come out of nowhere. We feel this is important to be covered considering how low students' stipends are."

At the master's level, each nine-month employee on a .50 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) appointment is guaranteed a minimum stipend of \$11,052.60, according to the 2017 Graduate Assistant Handbook.

The GAs surrounding the room nodded in agreement with some people snapping to some of the points the bargaining council brought up.

Private lawyer and lead counsel for USF John Dickinson told the

GAU that he understood where they were coming from but he was skeptical of them looking at things from a narrow standpoint.

"Do you have an idea of how much the university fees have increased over the years?" Dickinson said. "Do you know what the average increase has been in the nation? These are things you have to consider."

Dickinson encouraged the GAs to provide statistics for both the university and the U.S. by the next bargaining meeting before continuing any financial discussions.

He also made points about how the "economic situation is unknown" at this time, but Templeton said after the state Legislature finalizes the budget, they will be in a better position to discuss the financial aspects in April or May.

Bargaining council member Zulqarnain Haider said he believes this first bargaining session was a step in the right direction.

"Most of the disagreement lied in the financial aspects of the contract,

such as the stipends, pay wages, raises and health care coverage," Haider said in an interview with The Oracle. "There has to be some accounting done before the university will be willing to make any decisions. So that is why they were unclear about what they can or cannot do."

The anonymous GA expressed that they understand why the university officials had some pushbacks about the discussion, but they remain "hopeful" that there will be changes made in the upcoming bargaining sessions to prevent situations like theirs from occurring again.

"These are changes that are not in the best interest financially of the university," the anonymous GA said. "I had to threaten to go public with my situation before I was even paid attention to."

"We are disposable in a way — It's an issue of power here."

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USF area neighborhoods need development without displacement



Nathaniel Sweet

OPINION EDITOR

The University Area, a diverse working-class community north and west of the USF campus, has long been viewed through the lens of its challenges. Employment opportunities fall short and many residents live below the poverty line, while crime and public safety have been long-standing issues.

Over the past decade, however, the community has worked with leaders in nonprofits, business and government to usher in a steady transformation. Today, the University Area boasts a community center, community garden, a new library and a public park, largely organized under the University Area Community Development Corporation (UACDC).

As new developments enter the area, however, low-income residents become vulnerable to gentrification. In the interest of shared prosperity, local leaders in business and government must continue the UACDC's progress.

This year, redevelopment efforts are entering a new phase. The Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission have pledged over a million dollars to the Tampa Innovation Partnership, a coalition of businesses and



County and city officials should support pathbreaking strategies to prevent gentrification. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE**

nonprofits (including the UACDC), to draft a plan to bring new investments to the area.

One of the coalition's flagship projects is a \$2 billion redevelopment of the University Mall, which aims to convert empty stores into mixed-use residential and office spaces.

While these new changes are cause for hope, they also raise concerns about displacement. As the community adds infrastructure and businesses, it raises property values, potentially driving up rents in the surrounding neighborhood.

Sarah Combs, CEO of the UACDC, said in an interview with The Oracle that she shared these concerns and identified strategies to move forward.

"We definitely want to make improvements to the community, but not at the cost of residents."

One key strategy on the UACDC's part is signing community benefits agreements (CBAs), which are contracts with developers that require them to provide amenities to the community and hire locally. Ideally, any new projects should have these agreements attached.

The UACDC has also been carving out its own strategies to help residents stay put: buying

and banking land for affordable housing. It operates a handful of apartment complexes through its real estate arm, Harvest Hope Properties LLC, and recently gave away 10 new single-family homes to University Area residents. By stepping outside the private market, their approach makes quality homes accessible to working families.

Combs said that while these strategies have been successful, the UACDC cannot go at it alone.

"We're in a housing crisis... There's not enough affordable housing for the people that are living in this community," she said.

If the Hillsborough County government started its own land banking program, for instance, that would help alleviate the housing problem while preventing gentrification.

As the University Area community looks toward the 2020s, they need the promise that they can prosper from new developments and stay rooted in their homes. Local leaders should embrace pathbreaking strategies like land banking and CBAs to make good on that promise.

Nathaniel Sweet is a senior studying political science.

Florida Legislature must fairly fund school safety



Jared Sellick

COLUMNIST

It has been nearly three months since Florida schools implemented a controversial school guardian program which allows trained teachers and school personnel to act as armed guards.

The Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program was put into place in response to the devastating shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in February 2017.

It was created by Senate Bill 7030, which was introduced early last year into the Florida Legislature and signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis in May 2019.

Under the program, willing school personnel can volunteer to take a minimum of 144 hours of active shooter training in order to qualify to serve as an armed guard.

The program has been controversial since its conception and has raised concerns about putting more guns in school.

Proponents claim the program is a cheap way to prevent mass shootings, but critics point to potential unintended consequences. An inattentive guardian could have their gun stolen by a student, or a guardian could mistakenly shoot an unarmed student. As a result,

many school districts have opted out. Only 41 out of Florida's 67 counties are participating in the program.

The Legislature allocated \$67 million for the program, yet schools who have opted out are not able to allocate that money to use it for other safety measures.

Despite the fact that they do not have access to those state dollars, they are still mandated by the state to have armed security.

Counties that opted out could make good use of those state dollars by hiring police deputies or hardening schools with visible security measures, like gates and metal detectors. However, at the moment they cannot use those funds to enact these alternative safety measures.

Why has the Legislature not allowed counties that have opted out to use that large sum of money to keep Florida children safe in other ways? Why are they so determined to spend this money on additional weapons in schools?

In response to these issues, State Sen. Janet Cruz (D-Tampa) filed SB 304, which would allow counties that opted out to use these funds. However, the legislation isn't likely to become law in the Republican-controlled Legislature.

There are many concerns that school districts could have with this program. The Legislature should not punish counties that choose not to implement it.

Jared Sellick is a senior studying political science.

KOBEContinued from **PAGE 8**

helicopter crashed. Those aboard the helicopter also included another player and parent,"Wojnarowski tweeted.

Bryant retired in 2016 as the NBA's No. 3 all-time leading scorer with 33,643 points. On Saturday night, current Laker LeBron James surpassed Bryant by scoring 29 against the Philadelphia 76ers — incidentally in Bryant's hometown of Philadelphia.

"Continuing to move the game forward @KingJames. Much respect my brother #33644," Bryant tweeted after James surpassed him.

Reaction amongst the sports world — and the world in general — was immediate, including tweets by Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, former NBA point guard Tony Parker, former US Women's National Team player Brandi Chastain, ESPN personality Skip Bayless, TV icon Ellen DeGeneres, President Donald Trump, former President Barack Obama, among many more.

"There's no words to express the pain I'm going through with this tragedy of loosing my niece Gigi & my brother @kobebryant I love u and u will be missed [sic]," tweeted former teammate Shaquille O'Neal. "IM SICK RIGHT NOW."

A memorial popped up outside Staples Center, the home of the Lakers since 1999, almost immediately.

Meanwhile, NBA teams held moments of silence Sunday night. Additionally, the Toronto Raptors and San Antonio Spurs each let their first possession end in 24-second shot-clock violations, in honor of Bryant's No. 24, while the fans in San Antonio chanted "Kobe."

Commentary

By **Kevin Erlendsson**
GUEST COLUMNIST

On Oct. 10, 2017, the United States Men's National Team (USMNT) was defeated by Trinidad and Tobago, failing to get the single point required to qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

The USMNT has fallen from the upper echelon of the soccer world, nearly at the peak. It got lazy and forgot to look where they were stepping and fell into a freefall.

This was a major setback, but the ground was many miles below. There was plenty of time to deploy the parachute and steer back onto the mountain.

The U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) never pulled the chute. Its moves instead represented a swan dive toward the bottom, hoping to be cushioned by a big pile of cash resting on the concrete below.

Most federations would have been in scramble mode to prevent further damage, desperately grabbing for the rope. The USSF flipped 180 degrees, pointed both arms toward the ground and exclaimed, "Bring it on!"

It denied interviews to two highly respected managers in the international soccer community for its vacant job.

Tata Martino, fresh off guiding Atlanta United to the championship in MLS, reportedly wanted the job. The USSF did not speak to him allegedly because he doesn't speak fluent English, a requirement the federation had for the job.

As if Christian Pulisic struggled at Borussia Dortmund because he did not speak German.

Julen Lopetegui, mere months removed from finishing a near-perfect UEFA World Cup qualifying campaign with Spain,

In the midst of freefall USSF ignored parachute

wanted the job. The USSF did not hear him out.

The manager the USSF did hire? Someone who they waited an entire year for, until his contract with the prestigious and world-class Columbus Crew finished? Why, that would be Gregg Berhalter, who just so

negligence is much worse.

Michael Bradley has not played a complete game since 2014. Jozy Altidore cannot score the big one. Gyasi Zardes, to put it lightly, should not be anywhere near the national team conversation.

No player epitomizes this negligence like Omar Gonzalez.



Instead of playing young stars like Christian Pulisic, the USMNT has continued with aging players. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ERIK DROST

happens to have no international managerial experience.

His brother is also Jay Berhalter, the current CFO and presumed next CEO of the USSF. Surely just a crazy coincidence.

And speaking of management, the USSF had a presidential election so concealed and murky it put Bush vs. Gore to shame. After overstaying his welcome and letting the federation run lethargic, Sunil Gulati stepped down as president of the USSF.

In a field of former players talking big change and putting the investment of the national teams first, the voters — who, by the way, no one knows who they are or how they got there — elected Carlos Cordeiro, the right-hand man to Gulati, signalling the continuance of the establishment and acceptance of failure.

For all the executive negligence, the on-the-field

When Gonzalez's hall of fame-worthy own goal put the U.S. down a goal in the 17th minute in that fateful match against Trinidad and Tobago, it should have meant the end of an international career for the aging center back. Instead, he was in the squad for the Gold Cup last summer and even captained the team against Panama.

If Gonzalez were in any other top-50 federation in the world, he would never wear the badge again.

But perhaps that is the stark reality of the USMNT: A team that made the knockout stages in three of the four World Cups prior to 2018 is not a top-50 federation in the world anymore.

Because a top-50 federation would have pulled the parachute in a heartbeat, cleaned house on the soccer side and rebuilt itself through youth.

The Netherlands made

the final and semifinals of consecutive World Cups, but missed out in 2018. It ditched all its aging relics on the pitch, hired a respected manager with a track record in Ronald Koeman, who in turn handed the team over to young players like Matthijs De Ligt and Frenkie De Jong. It just spent 2019 on a march to the UEFA Nations League Final and is a favorite to win this year's European Championships.

While the USMNT does not have players of that quality, there is still a plethora of young talent available.

Tyler Adams will play a key role in a Red Bull Leipzig side vying for the Bundesliga title.

Pulisic has shown flashes of brilliance at Chelsea, a young team on a positive climb back to trophy contention.

Josh Sargent will soon cement his role as Werder Bremen's first-choice striker. Zach Steffen has the second most saves in the Bundesliga with Dusseldorf. Gio Reyna just broke Pulisic's own record, becoming the youngest American to debut in Germany's top league after playing 18 minutes for Borussia Dortmund a few weeks ago.

But for now, the USSF is ignoring these cords, instead opting to hold on tight to the heavy boulders of Zardes, Altidore and friends.

The federation believes that it can ride the MLS anchor and its own ignorance to a safe landing on its \$400 million revenue. The parachute was never an option to them.

This freefall is only going to end one way.

SPLAT.

Kevin Erlendsson is the Assistant Director of Sports at Bulls Media. Follow him on Twitter, @KErlendsson.

Kobe Bryant dies in helicopter crash near Los Angeles



Brian Hattab

SPORTS EDITOR

NBA legend Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash Sunday morning near Los Angeles.

The helicopter, which belonged to Bryant, crashed around 9:47 a.m. amid foggy conditions in Calabasas, California, according to the Los Angeles Times. All nine on board, including the pilot, were confirmed dead, including Bryant's 13-year-old

daughter Gianna Maria Onore. His wife, Vanessa, and three other daughters were reportedly not on board.

The cause of the crash was not known at the time of publication.

Bryant was 41.

Considered one of the greatest players in NBA history, Bryant played 20 seasons for the Los Angeles Lakers, winning five NBA championships and two NBA Finals MVPs. Bryant was an 18-time All-Star, winning the game's MVP award four times. The Lakers retired both Nos. 8 and 24 in 2017 in honor of both numbers he wore with the franchise.

Bryant also won gold in both the 2008 and 2012 Olympics



Kobe Bryant. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

and in the 2007 FIBA Americas Championship.

"The NBA family is devastated

by the tragic passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver

said in a statement. "For 20 seasons, Kobe showed us what is possible when remarkable talent blends with an absolute devotion to winning. ... We send our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Vanessa, and their family, the Lakers organization and the entire sports world."

Bryant was reportedly traveling to his Mamba Academy in nearby Thousand Oaks, according to ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski, for a basketball game at the academy.

"Bryant was on his way to a travel basketball game with his daughter Gianna when the

See **KOBE** on **PAGE 7**

Women's Basketball

How the AAC has been shaken up in 2020



Nolan Brown

STAFF WRITER

If there's one thing that's remained constant in the AAC, it's been the supremacy of the UConn Huskies. Since the formation of the conference seven seasons ago, the Huskies have won it every year.

Being six-time AAC champions definitely carries weight, but on top of that, the Huskies have never lost an AAC game — period.

While UConn's supremacy in league play is almost a guarantee, this season has shown that the one-horse race isn't clear and cut anymore.

Out of the Huskies' league wins last season, UConn was held to 10-point victories against Cincinnati on Feb. 2 and at USF on March 4. It had never happened in the seasons prior — then it happened twice in one.

Last season, UConn beat regular-season league opponents by an average of 32 points.

Out of the eight league games played so far, UConn has beat its opponents by an average of 33.5 points. But the Huskies haven't played Cincinnati, Tulane and typical second-choice favorite

USF.

It was only on Feb. 18, 2017, that UConn was truly given a run for its money when the Huskies narrowly won at Tulane 63-60.

Now, Tulane sits behind only UConn, with the Green Wave having just lost their first conference game halfway through the season.

"You look at the standings. It's really been shaken up," USF coach Jose Fernandez said. "We lost at Temple, you know, Wichita State beats Temple, we beat Wichita State. ... The conference tournament is going to be really interesting."

The AAC Tournament has been typically easy to predict — at least in the semifinals and the championship game. Out of the

past six, USF and UConn have met in the final four times.

Last year, the Bulls were the No. 5 seed, and their run in the tournament was ended by the Huskies in the semifinals. UCF, the No. 2 seed, went on to lose to UConn in the championship game.

The conference tournament relies on regular-season results, however. And there's really no way of tracking how this season will play out. Teams are beating other teams they shouldn't and vice versa.

Teams like Cincinnati, UCF and Houston are in between .500 and .600 and can almost be considered "wild card" candidates.

One-off wins are bound to

happen, but the Knights held their own in a 59-52 home loss against UConn on Jan. 16 and a 60-59 loss at Tulane on Wednesday.

The league is different now. There are skilled players across the board, and it can be anyone's night at any time, according to USF freshman Kristyna Brabencova.

"You never know what's going to happen," she said. "We just have to bring it every day."

Regardless of where each opponent ranks, focusing on the next game and taking it one day at a time is the key to staying alive in the conference, according to Bulls sophomore Sydney Harvey.

"We've just got to focus on what's at hand," Harvey said.