

Honoring Dr. King

The Office of Multicultural Affairs will commemorate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. with a series of events throughout the month including a dedication luncheon and a University Lecture Series speaker.



Alyssa Stewart

EDITOR IN CHIEF

As the new decade begins, so will another year of USF honoring the legacy of civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK).

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) will once again host its annual MLK Commemorative Week. This year its focus will be on three signature events throughout January instead of their usual outlined week of events.

This will include the annual MLK Dedication Luncheon,

University Lecture Series (ULS) speaker Lindsay Peoples Wagner and a QTPOC (Queer or Trans People of Color) and Coffee event, according to Assistant Director of OMA Tabitha Raj.

Annual MLK Dedication Luncheon

The purpose of the MLK Dedication Luncheon is for the campus and community to commemorate and reflect on the legacy of MLK.

The event will be on Friday, Jan. 24 from noon to 1 p.m. in the Marshall Student Center (MSC) Ballroom. This is one of USF's longest-running celebrations for the civil rights activist as it has been conducted annually for over 30 years, according to Raj.

The speakers next week will include OMA Director Stacy Phippen, Vice President of Student



OMA has been honoring MLK with a dedication luncheon for over 30 years. ORACLE FILE PHOTO

Success Paul Dosal and Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Studies Fai Howard.

There will also be a special performance by the USF Gospel Choir and a "call to action" to finish off the ceremony.

"We do a theatrical presentation in which students talk about how they emulate qualities of MLK, and each

person will receive a takeaway item which will encourage them to continue MLK's dream in this new decade," Raj said.

The new decade was an important element in choosing this year's "Re-imagining the Future" theme as it coincides with new beginnings.

"As we embark on a new decade we want USF students to

be able to reflect on challenges and accomplishments of the past while reimagining the future in terms of civic engagement and service," Raj said.

The luncheon is on a first-come, first-serve basis with a maximum capacity of 208 people with the roundtable set up.

Students have until 24 hours before the event to register on the OMA website. As of Jan. 14, the RSVP is at about 100 people.

Raj said that last year, all the seats were filled with additional people standing to observe in the back.

"A good mix of students and staff attend but we really want to encourage students that this is an event for them," Raj said. "We're also encouraging the community to come and attend the event as well."

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First consolidated election commences



Leda Alvim

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

USF students on all three

campuses can start thinking about the Student Government (SG) candidates who best represent them because election season is underway.

With the USF system consolidated by the July 1 deadline, SG officially opened its applications to students on the Tampa, St. Pete and Sarasota-Manatee campuses on Jan. 13.

Applications for the elections

will close on Feb. 7, and the student body will vote March 2-5 at their respective polling locations across campuses, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., and online.

Students from all campuses can apply to be president, vice president, senator, governor, lieutenant and join their campus councils. Candidates will be notified of their eligibility by 5 p.m. on Feb. 16.

In previous years, students voted for who they felt would best represent them in their college. However, because all campuses do not follow the same curriculum, this voting method can no longer apply.

Regardless of major and campus location, students will now vote to elect all 60 senators and 27 council members — nine members per campus.

The president and vice president debate will be held on Feb. 24 at the Marshall Student Center (MSC) Oval Theater at 7 p.m.

The governor, lieutenant and campus council debates will take place Feb. 19 at the MSC Ballroom at 7 p.m. and at Sarasota-Manatee's student center, Student Commons.

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The Oracle

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA'S
STUDENT NEWSPAPER
SINCE 1966

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The Oracle is published Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters, and once weekly, Wednesday, during the summer.

The Oracle allocates one free issue to each student. Additional copies are \$.50 each and available at the Oracle office (SVC 0002).

BY PHONE

Editor	974-5190
News	974-1888
Advertising	974-2620
Classified	974-2620

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NEWS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2020 THE ORACLE

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SG

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The final results will be announced on March 6 at noon on the Tampa campus in MSC 4200, the Senate Chamber.

SG will be structured much differently after consolidation is completed. It will be split into federal and local levels under a consolidated university. The executive, legislative and judicial branches will still remain but with a few additions.

The federal executive branch will consist of one student body president and vice president representing all three campuses, as well as an attorney general, solicitor general, chief financial officer and chief of staff. The elected president will also be appointed as a member of the Board of Trustees.

On the local level, the executive branch will have three governors representing each campus with the goal of preserving the culture and traditions of each campus while making decisions that best represent the campus' needs.

In order to provide fairness, each campus will have a guaranteed five seats in the Senate. The remaining 45 seats will be based on population percentage. This means Tampa will end up with approximately 44, St. Pete with nine and Sarasota-Manatee with seven seats.

On the local side of the legislative branch, SG will create three campus councils in charge of confirming the local executive branch positions, funding local organizations and student outreach to the campus. The council chair has to be a senator and from their respective campus.



The president and vice president debate will be held on Feb. 24 at the Marshall Student Center Oval Theater at 7 p.m.
ORACLE PHOTO/ LEDA ALVIM

As of Jan. 14, one application has been received for student body president from the Sarasota-Manatee campus, according to SG Director Gary Manka.

Candidates must be enrolled for at least six credit hours as an undergraduate or four credits as a graduate degree-seeking student in order to meet the eligibility requirements imposed by SG. In addition, candidates must maintain a 2.5 GPA and may not be under disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion, according to Manka.

To campaign, candidates must obtain a verification from the Elections Rules Commission (ERC) or SG Advising Office in order to start campaigning. "There is a \$1000 cap on each entity donation to each candidate's campaign," according to the general election application.

Manka said the salary rates for each student position are still undecided.

In regard to voter turnout, Manka said he expects to see more students participating as

the general elections will involve all three campuses.

"In the past, voting turnout was based upon who was running and the competitive nature. Like for instance, Tampa elections, you sometimes have four or five tickets competing, so that's what I call a competitive spirit that fuels voter turnout," Manka said. "For instance, we could have three campuses against each other in terms of vying for the seat. So that may, hopefully, foster more interest."

Despite the major changes, Manka said that the election process will be similar to years prior and affirms that challenges are common throughout the process.

"I'm sure we'll have all kinds of issues," Manka said. "It's just the nature of the beast. We're talking in terms of travel and communication over three distinct geographic regions. So there will be issues and stuff but we'll always be going to try and work to the win-win for everybody."

MLK

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ULS to bring Lindsay Peoples Wagner

As a part of a partnership between OMA and ULS, Editor in Chief of Teen Vogue Lindsay Peoples Wagner will be speaking Jan. 28 at 8 p.m. in the MSC Oval Theater.

Peoples Wagner is most well-known for being the youngest editor in chief of Condé Nast magazine — a mass media company that produces and maintains magazine brands such as GQ, The New Yorker and Vanity Fair — as well as Condé Nast's third black editor.

She commonly shares her experience in interviews about what it is like to be black and work in the fashion industry.

"When I started at Teen Vogue, it was such a struggle for me," Peoples Wagner said in an interview with the New York Times. "I'd never cried that much in my life. I felt like this industry would never open its doors to people like me."

The lecture is free for all USF students and community members.

QTPOC and Coffee event

QTPOC and Coffee is an event started last year with the purpose of having moderated conversations about the lives and experiences of trans and queer people.

"QTPOC addresses intersectionality through casual dialogue, particularly about the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation," Raj said.

The event will be held on Jan.

22 from 5-6 p.m. in OMA Suite 3300 with January's topic being mental health.

Dani Rosenkrantz, a licensed professional at the Counseling Center, will serve as the facilitator. Rosenkrantz's areas of study include LGBTQ issues, identity development, trauma and relationship concerns.

Coffee and pastries will be provided as well as a custom "QTPOC and Coffee" mug.

"We wanted to include this [event] as a part of our MLK events but we also wanted to have a focus on QTPOC and mental health," Raj said.

In 2019, one of the weekly events included the MLK Candlelight Vigil hosted by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and in 2018, the USF Contemporary Art Museum conducted a Pledge of Allegiance flag-raising ceremony.

Raj said other departments may have put together MLK-dedicated events this year as well, but it won't be grouped together like in years prior.

"Because a weekly calendar wasn't put together this year, student organizations have planned their own events that will celebrate MLK, but it just won't be considered a collaboration with (OMA)."

Raj encourages students to participate in this month's event to not only honor MLK but to gain new insights from the speakers.

"It is a great way for people to meet other students and receive a motivational talk about the kind of leader that MLK was," Raj said. "We want to highlight his values and make sure that is represented at USF."

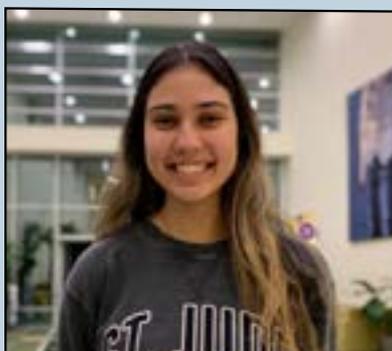
What you said...

Multimedia Editor Leda Alvim asked USF students what Martin Luther King Jr. means to them.



"[MLK's] contributions to society cut across every kind of minority in America today to fight for equality and human rights for everyone."

—Success Ekpenyong, a senior majoring in business analytics and information systems



"The whole civil rights movement is very powerful. The way [MLK] stood for minorities is very powerful and everything that he did for this country is just amazing."

—Emily Merino, a senior majoring in early education



"The amount of confidence that he had to do what he did shows that you should also feel empowered to stand up for something that you believe in, especially if it helps so many people."

—Brooke Beyer, a senior majoring in biological health sciences



"He was really the creator of several movements, not only for black people, but for other minorities. It's important to talk about how he was advocating for all people."

—Catie Rami, a junior majoring in psychology

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Florida teachers march for the education students deserve



Nathaniel Sweet

OPINION EDITOR

On Jan. 13, thousands of Florida teachers and school employees took to the streets of Tallahassee to march for better working and teaching conditions.

The march, organized by the Florida Education Association, comes on the heels of long-standing difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers in the Sunshine State.

At the same time, with the start of the spring semester, thousands of Florida high school seniors are gearing up for college admissions season. Many will find themselves without the skills they need to succeed in higher education, in part because of the system they are preparing to exit.

These failures are no accident. They are caused by deliberate policy choices from our state government.

Despite a growing population, Florida schools are operating on a steep pay cut. A 2019 analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that Florida school funding fell in the Great Recession and hasn't recovered since. Adjusted for inflation, our state spends 23 percent less on schools today than it did in 2007.

Less money for schools means larger class sizes and lower teacher salaries, even in large



Gaps in Florida's K-12 education leave many unprepared for college, and teachers are fighting to change it. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE**

cities like Miami, Orlando and Tampa, where the cost of living is rising and large numbers of students live in poverty.

True to form, Florida ranks No. 46 among states for teacher pay, according to a 2019 report by the National Education Association.

The sum-total of these problems is poor teacher morale and a substantial shortage of qualified educators: last year, there were over 2,000 teacher vacancies in the state.

Each of these difficulties have knock-on effects for colleges, universities and technical schools, where many young Floridians are left unprepared for postsecondary education.

Only a third of Florida high-school graduates in the class of 2019 were considered "college-ready" by the College Board in both English and math, based on their SAT scores. Well over a third (38 percent) failed to meet benchmarks in either subject.

Florida colleges and universities have been experimenting with ways to bridge the gap between high school and college for struggling students. In 2014, the state overhauled its remedial course system, allowing

students entering state colleges to take "gateway" courses without remedial classes in core subjects.

Universities, meanwhile, have tested their own strategies to keep students on track. USF, for instance, uses data on grades and attendance to reach out to struggling students.

If performance slips or participation drops, USF sends counselors, professors or resident assistants to reach out and connect them with resources. These efforts have helped boost USF's graduation rate and narrow achievement gaps between white students and students of color.

Nevertheless, it makes little sense that higher education should pick up the slack for K-12 schools. Nobody deserves such a scenario, not teachers, not professors and certainly not students. After years of bullying from Tallahassee, Florida educators are beginning to speak out on what it would take to fix it. Pay our teachers fair salaries. End needless high-stakes testing. Invest in our students and in our future.

Nathaniel Sweet is a senior studying political science.

Florida drags its feet on criminal justice reform



Jared Sellick

COLUMNIST

Floridians are currently serving outdated sentences under defunct drug laws, even as those rules have changed.

As lawmakers start to undo the damage done by mass incarceration, we should give justice to those stuck behind bars. It is time to bring our criminal justice system up to date.

In the 1990s, at the height of criminal enterprise and drug-related violence in Florida, the state Legislature passed a number of laws designed to harshly punish even the smallest drug-related offenses.

These measures, implemented all across the country, are collectively referred to as mandatory minimums.

These laws have often caught Floridians in a state of perpetual imprisonment and have proven to be a huge contributing factor to mass incarceration.

They lead to disproportionate punishment to many who have committed low-level drug crimes.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has pointed out that many of these laws have led to racial disparities and many judges around the country have complained that these laws take away from their discretion.

In recent years, some of

Florida's drug laws have been amended. For instance, in 2014, the threshold for serving 15 years in prison for selling pills like hydrocodone, an opioid used to treat moderate to severe pain, was changed from selling 22 pills to selling 77 pills.

Prior to 2018, people incarcerated under the old laws still had to serve out their sentences, even as the statutes had changed, per the Florida Constitution.

Luckily, in the last election cycle, Florida voters were given the opportunity to weigh in on this dysfunctional system.

In 2018, Florida voters approved Amendment 11, which, among other things, removed that constitutional provision. The amendment was ratified with 62 percent of the vote.

This law would mean that inmates currently serving mandatory minimums could be resentenced for a more reasonable time in prison, provided that the state Legislature lay out the rules on resentencing for judges to follow.

Yet, research from the Project on Accountable Justice has found that an astonishing 640 inmates are serving sentences longer than the laws (that are currently on the books) dictate. Despite Floridians' approval for Amendment 11, the state Legislature has taken shockingly little action to lessen the sentences of individuals who have been impacted by mandatory minimums.

Judges are not able to resentence the 640 inmates

SHEPARDSONContinued from **PAGE 8**

in straight sets.

Prior to playing her final two collegiate seasons at USF, she was a part of a Division II national championship team at Tampa and was Gatorade Player of the Year as a senior at Tampa Prep.



As a player, Shepardson helped lead the Bulls to what is to date their most recent NCAA Tournament appearance (2002). **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF ATHLETICS**

Since Shepardson graduated, the Bulls have made only one postseason appearance, falling in five sets to Georgia Tech in the first round of the 2018 National Invitational Volleyball Championship.

But she has a knack for turning programs around. Shepardson turned San Jose State from a four-win team into one that won 17 matches three seasons into her tenure. The Spartans' back-to-back winning seasons in 2017 and 2018 were the program's first since 2001.

Prior to San Jose State, she turned a zero-win Cal State Bakersfield team into one that won 21 matches in her third season.

Now, her alma mater is Shepardson's next fixer-upper project.

"Oh, it's coming back. It's coming back with a full vengeance," Shepardson said. "I really have a lot of pride in this program, and I want to see

it excel. I've watched it over the years, and I can't wait to get in the gym to help these young women be the best student-athletes they can be.

"You've got to build up the culture with the student-athletes and really get to know them and help get them all in so they put

in a great effort both mentally and physically ... and then once we build up the culture, they're going to have as much pride as I did as a student-athlete and they're going to do it themselves — they're going to perform and they're going to love being a Bull."

Good, local recruiting will also be a pillar of Shepardson's team.

"I'll go up and down the state, to be honest. I have a lot of good connections," Shepardson said. "We'd love to get the local talent, and I think being familiar with them and having a good reputation here in Florida and just having a lot of good relationships I think will help us get those local student-athletes to stick around in Tampa."

But for now, being back at USF is a nice trip down memory lane for the Bulls' new coach.

"I'm ecstatic," Shepardson said. "I get teary eyed driving around campus. It's a wonderful experience — wonderful opportunity back here in Tampa."

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in the rotation remains to be seen. Freshmen right-handers Orion Kerkering and Jack Jasiak could be the answer. Kerkering posted a career 1.05 ERA and 214 strikeouts at Venice High School, while Jasiak had a career ERA of 1.20 and 250 strikeouts at F.W. Springstead High School in Spring Hill.

"I don't know mentally if they're [Kerkering and Jasiak] ready, but stuff-wise, they have a chance to be really special arms in this program," Mohl said. "Both of them have really elite stuff. They're two different pitchers. Kerkering's more fastball, breaking ball.

"Jack's more of a fastball, command guy who's got an

when the injury-plagued Bulls needed them most.

"Baron Stuart, I'm just looking for consistency," Mohl said. "Dylan Burns was great for us last year. He ate up a lot of innings and he had marginal success. He was really good late for us.

"And then, obviously getting Koff, Ragsdale and Hoffman back. Ragsdale could be in that starting rotation. So we have some options."

Whoever winds up in the starting rotation for the Bulls when this season starts Feb. 14 will pitch as a proverbial underdog most of the season. USF was picked to finish seventh in the AAC. But Mohl isn't worried about preseason predictions, as they've been wrong before.



Collin Sullivan was the Bulls' Friday night starter last year and likely will be again in 2020. Who gets the ball Saturday and Sunday remains to be seen. **ORACLE PHOTO/BRIAN HATTAB**

above average slider. They're two different breaking balls, which is nice to have, but they'll both be 90-92 [MPH]. And they're both competitive."

Mohl will also have returning arms, including right-handers Baron Stuart and Dylan Burns. Stuart went 4-3 in 10 starts last season with a 5.48 ERA. Burns posted a high ERA as well (5.23), but logged a number of innings at the backend of the bullpen

"Preseason rankings to me mean nothing," Mohl said. "My first year, they picked us seventh or eighth. Everybody bet against us. We ended up No. 2. It's just a ranking. The proof will be in the pudding once we get rolling into the season and to conference play and see where we finish."

Wherever the Bulls finish, it'll be well earned, as USF plays the proverbial "Big 3" (UF, FSU and Miami) on the road at least once

this season, including a three-game weekend series against the Gators from March 6-9.

"It's big," Mohl said. "It's going to prepare us for the American. Florida's a great program. They've got a really good team coming back this year. ... That's a great program and that's what we want to test ourselves against, because down the road, in June, when the regionals come, if we're not hosting, usually we end up in Gainesville, so it's a nice test."

Thankfully for Mohl and his team, due to the scheduling of local programs like the "Big 3," they don't have to leave the state of Florida until the second weekend of AAC play at the end of March.

"It's huge," Mohl said. "Being in Illinois for five years, when I

was an assistant coach up there [at Illinois State], your first six weeks, you're on the road. You got real used to the hotels. It's good for our guys from a class standpoint — from just a well-being standpoint, that they get to sleep in their own beds at night and we're not on bus rides all over the place.

"So it's great having sunshine down in Florida."

InBrief

Wilcox signs with agency

Former USF tight end Mitchell Wilcox is one step closer to turning pro.

Wilcox has signed with sports agency VaynerSports, the agency tweeted Wednesday.



Mitchell Wilcox
SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF
ATHLETICS

Based out of New York and Los Angeles, VaynerSports bills itself as “the agency for the modern day athlete” and features clients such as Peyton Barber of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Leonard Williams of the New York Giants and Dwayne Harris of the Oakland Raiders.

Wilcox, who is set to participate as USF’s lone representative in Saturday’s East-West Shrine Bowl at Tropicana Field (3 p.m. TV: NFL Network | Radio: WHBO-AM 1040/SiriusXM Ch. 88) is projected to be the Bulls’ lone pick in the upcoming NFL Draft, potentially going in Round 5 or later.

Wilcox finished his USF career as the all-time leader in touchdown receptions by a tight end (11) and receiving yards as a tight end (1,326).

Volleyball

Bulls job a homecoming for Shepardson



Brian Hattab

SPORTS EDITOR

It wasn’t a hard decision for USF volleyball’s new coach to make, even though it involves a move across the country.

And why not? It is, after all, a homecoming for Jolene Shepardson.

For the Tampa native and USF alumna, leaving San Jose State, where she had been the coach since 2014, to take the Bulls’ job was an easy decision.

“I love being back and love being a Bull,” Shepardson said. “I had an incredible experience as a student-athlete. I want to do that for these young women here, and so I couldn’t be more happy to be back home.”

Things have changed at USF since the last time Shepardson was a Bull — though, for the better.

“Oh, it’s wonderful. A lot of good movement, both on campus and in the athletic department,” Shepardson said. “A lot of great resources for our student-athletes that are incredible. We have everything that we need and we’re just going to get better and better.”

“When I was here, it was wonderful, but now, there’s even more awesome assets to this



Jolene Shepardson was named head volleyball coach Jan. 9. ORACLE PHOTO/BRIAN HATTAB

program.”

Shepardson was a member of the last USF team to win a conference championship as well as make the NCAA Tournament

(2002). She was second on the team with 416 kills, 35 aces and 377 digs on the way to a second-round appearance after defeating FSU

See **SHEPARDSON** on **PAGE 7**

Baseball

After injury-filled 2019 season, Mohl optimistic about 2020 campaign



Brian Hattab

SPORTS EDITOR

It’s safe to say the 2019 season didn’t go according to plan for USF baseball coach Billy Mohl.

Hampered by injuries, the Bulls failed to qualify for the eight-team AAC Tournament in Clearwater, finishing last in the

nine-team conference.

But it’s not as if it was all for naught.

Considering the numerous injuries to the pitching staff, including the loss of right-handers Carson Ragsdale, Graham Hoffman and Ben Koff to Tommy John surgery, the fact the Bulls remained mathematically alive for the conference tournament until the penultimate day of the season was a positive.

“Part of the positive was, as banged up as we were on the mound with the seven arms that we lost throughout the course of

the year, those guys still held their own in terms of, if you look at the final numbers and everything,” Mohl said. “We were middle of the pack pitching-wise and guys stepped up and some guys got bigger roles than what they had, so they have more experience under their belt heading into this year.”

The last time a season like 2019 happened, the following season was filled with positive results. In 2016, USF was also hampered by pitching injuries, necessitating freshmen to pitch more innings than expected. Then, in 2017, the Bulls went 42-19 and made the

NCAA Tournament.

The only real consistent arm in the rotation last season was now-senior right-hander Collin Sullivan. He pitched a team-high 81.2 innings with a 3.86 ERA. Sullivan put together a magical performance against then-No. 6 North Carolina in Chapel Hill, going 6.2 innings, allowing one run on two hits while striking out seven in what was ultimately a 3-2 loss.

It’s probably safe to say Sullivan will be the Friday night starter again. But who complements him

See **BASEBALL** on **PAGE 7**