

Some USF buildings attempt to mitigate custodial understaffing

By Katherine Maily and
Alexandra Urban

Numerous amenities at the university, such as Housing Services and Building Services, have faced custodial understaffing issues brought on by a complicated job market and the effects of the pandemic.

The concerns of understaffing have been slowly resolving in areas such as Housing Services and Building Services, but the Marshall Student Center (MSC) has continued to struggle in finding new permanent applicants to solve the issue, according to Associate Director for Operations Dave Timmann.

Building Services provides custodial services to 83 Education and General (E&G) buildings on the Tampa campus, according to the Building Services site.

Currently, Building Services has the funds for 119 staff positions, but Associate Director of Communications Aaron Nichols said only 85-95 are filled on any given day. Building Services is actively trying to fill the remaining 24-34 positions.

"Building Services staff levels have been impacted by both budget reductions and position vacancies," Nichols said. "Recent budget reductions [brought down] Building Services' staff levels by 10 positions."

The MSC has its own custodial team, which is currently made up of 12 staff members, according to Director of the MSC Matthew Marshall. The staff usually has 20 people, so many must work double shifts in order to make up for the staff shortage, he said.

"We're trying to do everything

we can to get us back to what was normal. The only thing that has been beneficial for us is that we are not as busy as what we would be during a normal non-COVID year," Marshall said.

"With the numbers that we have for people coming in here daily, for meetings, organizations and food, there still is a significant amount of traffic and it's very hard for our staff to stay on top."

Housing also has a deficit in its custodians, seeing a 20% decrease from last semester, according to Assistant Vice President of Housing and Residential Education Ana Hernandez. Hernandez couldn't provide the number of staff from the fall or spring semester by the time of publication.

■ See CUSTODIAL on PAGE 3



The Marshall Student Center is currently hiring to fill custodial staff vacancies to relieve current staff from working double shifts and overtime. ORACLE PHOTO/LEDA ALVIM

SG prepares for upcoming spring election

By Michael Mardones
STAFF WRITER

Student Government (SG) is in preparations to hold its spring 2022 general election, as every position is open for the student body to vote for.

Applications for the positions opened Jan. 10 and will be closing Jan. 28 at 11:59 p.m., followed by a rolling approval process by the SG Advising Office that ends Feb. 4.

Each position requires that the candidate have a 2.5 GPA and be taking at least six credit hours as an undergraduate student. Graduate students can also run and are required to have at least a 3.0 GPA and be taking at least four credit hours. Any students with past conduct issues, suspensions or expulsions are prohibited from running for any position.

As of Jan. 21, 17 students from

the Tampa campus, six from the St. Pete campus and zero from the Sarasota-Manatee campus have applied for positions, according to Supervisor of Elections Savannah Carr.

For the campaign season, which begins Feb. 14 and runs through March 3, there are no rules currently in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

More general campaign rules such as defining bribery and

acceptable media will be covered in a series of informational meetings that will be available starting this week to candidates that were approved to run.

Town halls will be occurring Wednesday and Thursday at all three campuses, where students are invited to meet SG leadership, ask questions and learn about the upcoming election.

The Wednesday town halls will be from 6-7 p.m. at

the Sarasota-Manatee campus in classroom A-217 and the St. Pete campus in the Student Life Center room 2100.

Thursday's town hall will be at the Tampa campus from 6-7 p.m. at the Marshall Student Center (MSC) room 4200. All of the town halls will also be available for students online via Microsoft Teams.

In-person debates are going

■ See ELECTION on PAGE 3

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ELECTION

Continued from PAGE 1

to be returning to this election cycle as long as COVID-19 does not become a bigger problem for the health of students and staff, said Carr.

Debates for positions like governor and lieutenant governor that only impact one campus will be restricted to the local level. The date and time of the presidential and vice-presidential debate have not been decided, but it will be held on the Tampa campus.

Carr intends to make the debate hybrid so students from other campuses can attend and ask questions since the president and vice president impact all campuses.

This election will also feature amending the SG Constitution. Amendments being voted on will include lowering the number of Senate seats, consolidation of positions among the branches, funding resolutions and the installment of positions that encompass diversity engagement features, according to SG Attorney General Alliyah Edwards.

Students will be equipped with detailed summaries of the specific amendments up

for change or implementation during voting week. Before then, Edwards encouraged students to attend Senate meetings to witness and be a part of the process.

Voting begins Feb. 28 and runs through March 3. If needed, the Election Rules Committee will hold a run-off election March 8-9.

Voting will be done online for this election, but there will be “polling stations” on campus that provide students with a QR code to cast their vote. There will be one station consistently in front of the MSC in Tampa, the University Student Center in St. Pete and the entrance building on the Sarasota-Manatee campus, according to Carr.

More polling stations will be rotated around the campuses to maximize availability and convenience for students.

In accordance with the SG Constitution, paper ballots will be available in the SG office, however, only as a last resort. Students are encouraged to vote online in places that provide computers and internet access, such as the library, before resorting to a paper ballot.



In-person debates will be returning for this year's election, but they will also be available online for students from other campuses. ORACLE PHOTO/LEDA ALVIM

CUSTODIAL

Continued from PAGE 1

After adopting new application incentives last semester, Housing Services has recently seen an increase in applications for residential custodian positions. Temporary staff may be necessary until a sufficient number of permanent staff have completed the application process, Hernandez said.

The decrease in Housing custodial staff first began in late 2019 and has been attributed to changes in the job market and difficulties associated with COVID-19. With the return to in-person learning, the custodians have been stretched thin to accommodate the USF community.

The MSC has also seen a decrease in staff, due in part to some members retiring or finding other jobs. At the start of the pandemic, the MSC went into a hiring freeze, so when staff left for another job, Marshall said he couldn't refill the vacant positions.

He said the MSC had opened application periods since the fall semester for custodial staff, and in the most recent period there were only 10 applicants. Last semester, Timmann offered positions to four people, but only one accepted.

The statewide change to the minimum wage introduced another challenge. The increase to \$15 an hour by 2026 in Florida has made it difficult for Building Services to compete with private industries who have already increased their hourly wage, according to Nichols.

Custodial workers in Building Services recently received an hourly wage increase to \$11.75 and senior custodial workers are

being paid \$14.14 an hour, he said.

In November 2021, the hourly wage for a residential custodian position was raised from \$12 to \$15 in order to attract new applicants, according to Hernandez.

The MSC, however, is unable to offer \$15 an hour to its custodians, Marshall said, making it difficult to compete with local businesses who have increased their hourly wage.

“We don't have that ability to pay at that level,” Marshall said. “We were able to get an increase and there are increases that are taking place at different rates across campus. But still, we aren't at that \$15 an hour rate.”

Custodial staff in the MSC are currently receiving \$12.97 an hour, which was recently raised about a month ago from \$10.97, Timmann said.

The job market has created difficulties in finding and hiring new staff members, Hernandez said, but the number of applicants Housing Services has seen with the beginning of the new semester is promising.

Housing Services is currently in the final phases of hiring around 10 new applicants, which will play a crucial role in reaching an adequate amount of staff necessary to care for the number of students currently on campus.

To fill this gap until a sufficient number of permanent staff have completed the hiring process, temporary staff may be hired.

“We're hoping that the combination of being able to process and bring on board the permanent staff, as well as supplement with some of the temporary staff, that we will be able to get back up to normal operations as quickly as

possible,” Hernandez said.

The temporary staff would fill the custodial positions until an adequate amount of permanent staff has been hired and trained, according to Hernandez.

“My hope is that we'll be able to resolve the issues and have full-force USF employees in the next 30 to 60 days,” she said. “If we can do it sooner, that would be the best case scenario all around.”

To make up for the unfilled positions in Building Services, the department has also been contracting custodial labor through City Wide Facilities Solutions on a monthly basis. This is funded from the salary lapse created from the vacancies.

“Building Services can modify the amount of contracted labor up or down at any time,” Nichols said. “The number of contracted personnel scales in accordance with the number of filled staff positions to help mitigate, or offset, the difference.”

As Building Services fills its staff vacancies, the amount of contracted labor will decrease, he said. From the perspective of the USF community, staffing levels haven't made a noticeable impact on the service the department provides, according to Nichols.

The MSC will not be looking at third-party custodial labor contracting companies to temporarily fill vacancies, but Marshall said he thinks the team will be fully staffed again by Spring Break.

“The one thing that we can do is try to work with them the best that we can ... and to create an environment that is one that is conducive for people to have an enjoyable experience in their employment,” Marshall said.

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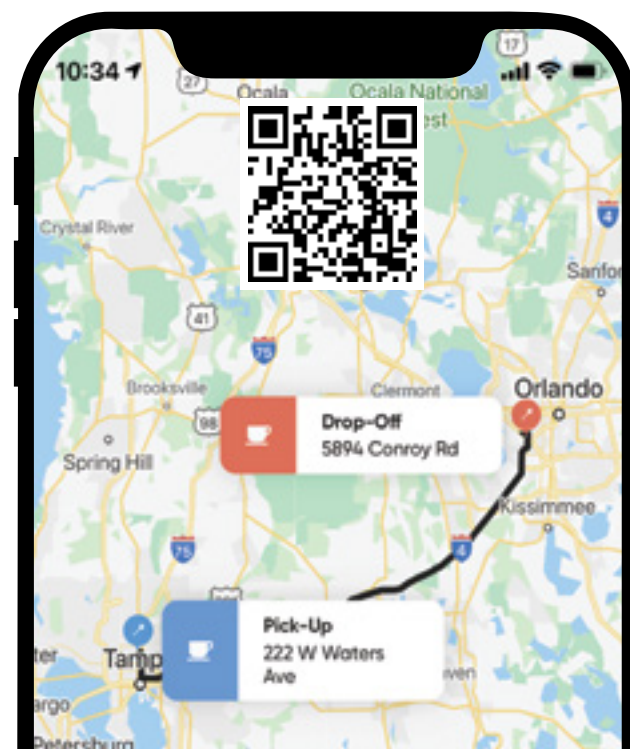
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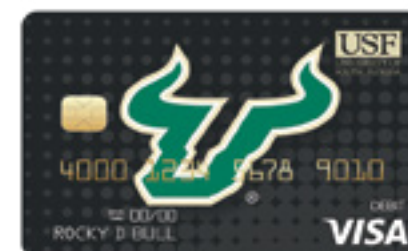
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“Individual Freedom” Bill, better named the tyranny of the majority

By Marcelene Pilcher
OPINION CO-EDITOR

The Florida Senate advanced SB 148 on Jan. 18, a bill that would allow members to sue organizations that mandate trainings on discrimination that make them uncomfortable, also prohibiting instructors from recommending materials that “contradicts certain principles.”

SB 148, ironically dubbed “Individual Freedom,” should be laughed out of the Senate. Its blatant censorship of widely accepted concepts on the grounds of discomfort coming from the “anti-snowflake” party.

Prohibiting the recommendation of any materials or training that represent a company’s values blatantly contradicts free speech.

Tolerance is a key skill when working in a collaborative workplace or scholastic environment. It’s a skill like any other. It’s commonplace for organizations to mandate trainings for skills like sales.

Banning these trainings on the grounds of discomfort is laughable and mitigates the company’s ability to properly train its employees.

SB 148 also prohibits instructors from recommending any materials that cover such topics. Banning anyone from recommending any material is a blatant violation of free speech.

It’s clear that the arbiters of this bill are attempting to censor those who believe differently than them.

Proponents of SB 148 argue



Sen. Manny Diaz’s SB 148 is an attempt to censor organizations’ member diversity training on the grounds that white employees may be uncomfortable. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

that such trainings attempt to convince organization members that white people are inherently racist, or are as individuals at fault for past social discrimination.

“No individual is inherently racist, sexist or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, solely by the virtue of his or her race or sex,” said Florida Sen. Manny Diaz regarding the bill.

The company tolerance trainings the bill references don’t place blame for any structural or societal issues.

HRDQ’s diversity training titled “Diversity Works” is one of the most popular for large-scale employers and organizations.

Per its website, the training includes three components, “Understanding Self – Describe what makes you

the unique individual you are, Understanding Others – I recognize what makes others the unique individuals they are. Communication – Consider differences and act respectfully in the workplace.”

This bill is blatant censorship and an attempt to silence ideas that the Republican Party disagrees with, and should be dropped.

Companies have the right to educate employees on values they believe are integral to the workplace, and discomfort does not excuse ignorance.

Marcelene Pilcher is a junior studying integrated public relations and advertising.

New bill forcibly outs LGBTQ students

By Brielle Lopez
OPINION CO-EDITOR

LGBTQ adolescents are at risk of being outed to dangerous situations, thanks to HB 1557. The House Education and Employment Committee advanced this bill Jan. 20, making schools out primary students under the guise of help.

While parents are expected to have good intentions for their children, that isn’t always the case — especially with bigoted parents. Teachers should decide at their discretion, rather than be mandated to notify parents of a child’s sexual orientation.

If schools violate the rule, parents have the power to seek legal action and win legal fees. Members of the committee say this bill would further parents’ ability to decide what’s best for their children, claiming it’s for the well-being of the students.

Coming out has excruciating consequences for many kids. Half of teens get a negative reaction when they come out to their parents, and 1 in 4 are kicked out as a result, according to True Colors United.

A 2019 study by the New England Journal of Medicine found that an estimated 20,000 LGBTQ adolescents will be subjected to conversion therapy by the time they turn 18.

Conversion therapy is unethical and often traumatizing.

The Independent Forensic Expert Group (IFEG) concluded in 2020 that conversion therapy is unscientific and violates the global ban on torture and ill-

treatment, claiming it often leads to PTSD.

To out a child to their parents is to put them at risk of a negative reaction, thrown out of the house or sent to conversion therapy.

Rep. Randy Fine advocated for this bill when speaking to the committee, stating school boards have been prioritizing politics over students and parents. Fine has it backwards, outing students before they’re ready causes more harm than good.

While parents have primary responsibility for their children, they don’t always have the student’s best interest in mind, especially after the student comes out.

When a student is hesitant to come out to their parents, we should trust their judgment rather than out them.

HB 1557 violates the privacy of students who may confide in teachers, an adult at the school that they trust where they may not have one at home.

This bill shouldn’t be advanced for the safety of LGBTQ youth. Some parents value bigotry over their child’s safety, so to progress this bill is to heighten the possibility of subjecting more kids to abuse.

Brielle Lopez is a senior studying English.

WBB

Continued from PAGE 8

in program history.

Midseason heartbreak of the year

USF loses to No. 2 UConn 60-53 (Nov. 21)

While the 52-49 loss to Tennessee in Knoxville is a good option for this category, the history between USF and UConn is what makes this particular matchup more meaningful.

The Bulls and Huskies were conference rivals from 2005-20, and in that time USF never managed to win going 0-30 in their matchups against UConn. As a matter of fact, none of the previous games were even close, with UConn always winning by at least 10 points.

When the two teams met in November in the Bahamas for the Battle 4 Atlantis Tournament, the Bulls played the Huskies tighter than they ever have before.

USF was tied with UConn going into the fourth quarter but strong performances from reigning national player of the year Paige Bueckers and UConn freshman sensation Azzi Fudd pushed the Huskies past the Bulls for a seven point win.

As well as the Bulls played, they will have to wait for another day to take down their rivals.

Midseason surprise player

Dulcy Fankam Mendjiadeu

Anyone who watched Mendjiadeu play during her two seasons at Memphis is probably not surprised by the talent that she's displayed since arriving at USF. What is surprising however, is how quickly she's gelled with a team that returned all of last season's starters.

Although she started off the year coming off the bench for the first eight games of the season as a backup to senior forward



Junior guard Sydni Harvey has been one of the team's most consistent players on both of the ends of the floor this season. ORACLE PHOTO/ALEXANDRA URBAN

Shae Leverett, she finally broke into the starting lineup in a win against VCU on Dec. 12.

Since becoming a starter, Mendjiadeu has been an immediate spark giving the Bulls' top-end offensive production down low in addition to her rim protection that she offers on the defensive end.

Mendjiadeu is currently in top form scoring double-digit points in four consecutive games including a 23-point performance against Tulane that matched her career high.

She will continue to be one of the Bulls most important players as they near postseason play.

Midseason MVP

Elena Tsineke and Sydni Harvey

With the amount of talent on the Bulls' roster this season, there's room for about three or four different players in this category. But the two players that likely have had the biggest impact on the Bulls season thus far are guards Tsineke and Harvey.

Tsineke is currently the team's

leading scorer at 15.2 points per game and combined for 55 points in the Bulls' past two wins against Tulsa and Temple.

She is likely the most skilled offensive player on the roster able to score efficiently at all three levels. Tsineke has also been one of the most clutch as coach Jose Fernandez will often look to her in late game situations.

Harvey, much like Tsineke, also has a propensity for heroics as she demonstrated in the victory against Stanford. While she ranks fourth on the team in scoring, she has been by far the team's best shooter making 41.8% of her three-point attempts.

Even when she's not at her best on the offensive end, one can always expect Harvey's effort on defense as she's consistently tasked with guarding the opposing team's best perimeter player and she does so at a high level.

Grade: B: While the Bulls had an impressive start to the season, their mediocre form of late has been costly and resulted in some poor performances.

MBB

Continued from PAGE 8

Javon Greene who lit UCF up for 19 points on 7-of-12 shooting and 5-of-10 from three-point range.

He was joined in double-digit scoring by guards Caleb Murphy and Jamir Chaplin.

Keeping a team like UCF at bay not only sparks the confidence of the team but proves they have the potential to take down some talented teams if they manage to find consistency.

Midseason heartbreak of the year

USF falls to Auburn University 52-58 (Nov. 19)

The Bulls were able to face No. 21 Auburn at Amalie Arena early on in their nonconference schedule and gave the Tigers a run for their money.

USF opened some eyes as they took a 33-26 lead going into halftime.

Ultimately, Auburn would go on to outscore the Bulls 33-19 in the second half and managed to hold them off to seal the win.

Murphy led the team with 19 points and six rebounds, and had Greene trailing behind him with 15 points and three rebounds.

It was the best the Bulls played against a ranked opponent this season and saw it slip away from them in the final minutes.

Midseason surprise

Javon Greene

In a season where the Bulls are going through a nearly complete roster turnover, Greene has made a name for himself in his first season with the program.

The transfer from George Mason is currently second on the team in scoring with 10.5 points per game. He is also far and away the team's best shooter making 35% of his three-pointers on a high volume.

Greene has also had really

great moments for the Bulls this season. In addition to his impressive performance against UCF, he also hit a game-winner against North Carolina A&T in the team's third game of the season.

Midseason MVP

Caleb Murphy

It is no surprise Murphy has rightfully claimed this spot, he's clearly been the Bulls' most important player through their first 17 games.

Having started every game so far this season, he leads the team in scoring, averaging 11.9 per game. Murphy also leads the team in assists with 3.5 per game.

Murphy has also shown a steady improvement to his offensive arsenal, taking and making more jump shots this season in addition to his ability to take the ball to the basket.

The next step in his evolution is to add a reliable three-point shot, if he does he could become one of the most complete offensive players in the AAC.

Looking forward

If they still face challenges due to the pandemic, it is unclear as to when the season will resume for the Bulls.

Although USF has already played both of its matchups against No. 10 Houston, it still has a handful of challenging and important games ahead of them in Cincinnati, SMU, Tulane and the road leg of the War on I-4.

The Bulls will have to find a level of consistency that they have struggled with in the first half of the season if they want to have any form of success come postseason play.

Grade: C-

USF women's basketball midseason report card



Francisco Rosa

SPORTS EDITOR

With high expectations going into the 2021-22 season, the USF women's basketball team (14-5, 3-1 AAC) has been a bit of a roller coaster through its first 19 games.

The Bulls played one of the toughest nonconference slates of any team in the country and opened some eyes as they took down a pair of then-top 10 ranked opponents in Oregon and Stanford.



Sophomore guard Elena Tsineke has combined for 55 points over the Bulls last two games. She's currently averaging 15.2 points per game. ORACLE PHOTO/ALEXANDRA URBAN

As injuries have begun to plague some of the Bulls' key players, they fell out of the Top 25 rankings for the first time this

year following an ugly 67-51 loss to UCF on Jan. 16.

Although USF is currently far from the levels that it was

reaching during the early parts of the season, it should still be seen as one of the favorites to once again win the conference title later this season.

Here's a look at some of the best moments and players of the Bulls' season thus far.

Midseason game of the year

USF beats No. 7 Stanford 57-54 (Nov. 26)

On the heels of its victory against then-ranked No. 9 Oregon, the Bulls took it up a notch and took down the reigning national champions, Stanford Cardinal, in dramatic fashion.

After looking like the superior team for much of the game, USF

led by as many as 12 points before Stanford made a furious run in the fourth quarter to make it a back-and-forth affair over the final minutes of the game.

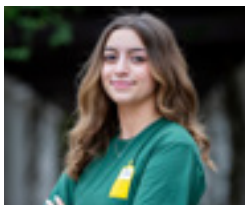
The Cardinal looked like they would steal the game away after Stanford's Lexie Hull knocked down a three-pointer with nine seconds left to give her team a 54-52 lead.

USF guard Sydni Harvey had different plans, however. She knocked down a three of her own with three seconds remaining to give the Bulls the lead and ultimately end the game.

Harvey's shot and the ending of this game was not just one of the best moments of the season, but one of the most memorable

■ See WBB on PAGE 7

USF men's basketball midseason report card



Lanie De La Milera

STAFF WRITER

USF men's basketball has faced a lot of ups and downs in its season so far between game performance and issues beyond their control.

The Bulls are currently 6-11 (1-4, AAC) with just a .353 winning percentage overall and lagging behind in conference play currently in ninth place, only ahead of winless Wichita



USF freshman guard Caleb Murphy has emerged as the team's star this season leading the program in points and assists. ORACLE PHOTO/FRANCISCO ROSA

State and Tulsa.

COVID-19 has also impacted the Bulls' season, forcing either a postponement or cancellation

for three games on their schedule. Most recently, the team's Saturday matchup against Temple was postponed due

to health and safety protocols within USF's program.

As the Bulls hope to turn it around in the second half of

their schedule, here's how they have fared through the first half of the season.

Midseason game of the year

USF beats UCF 75-51 (Jan. 15)

By far the Bulls' best performance of the season, USF seemingly couldn't miss against the Knights in this year's first meeting of the War on I-4. It was also the program's first win in the rivalry since 2020.

What looked like a tough matchup against UCF turned into an explosive USF performance led by a red-hot offense.

The Bulls were sparked by strong play from senior guard

■ See MBB on PAGE 7