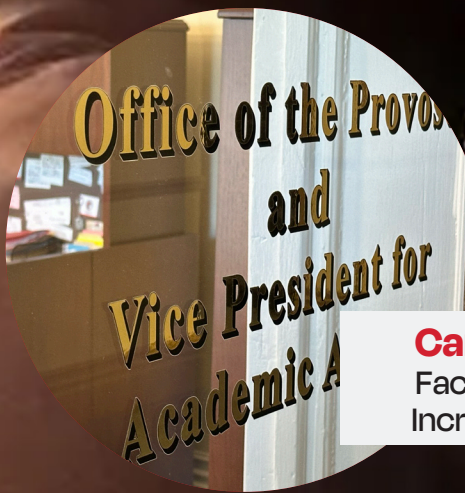
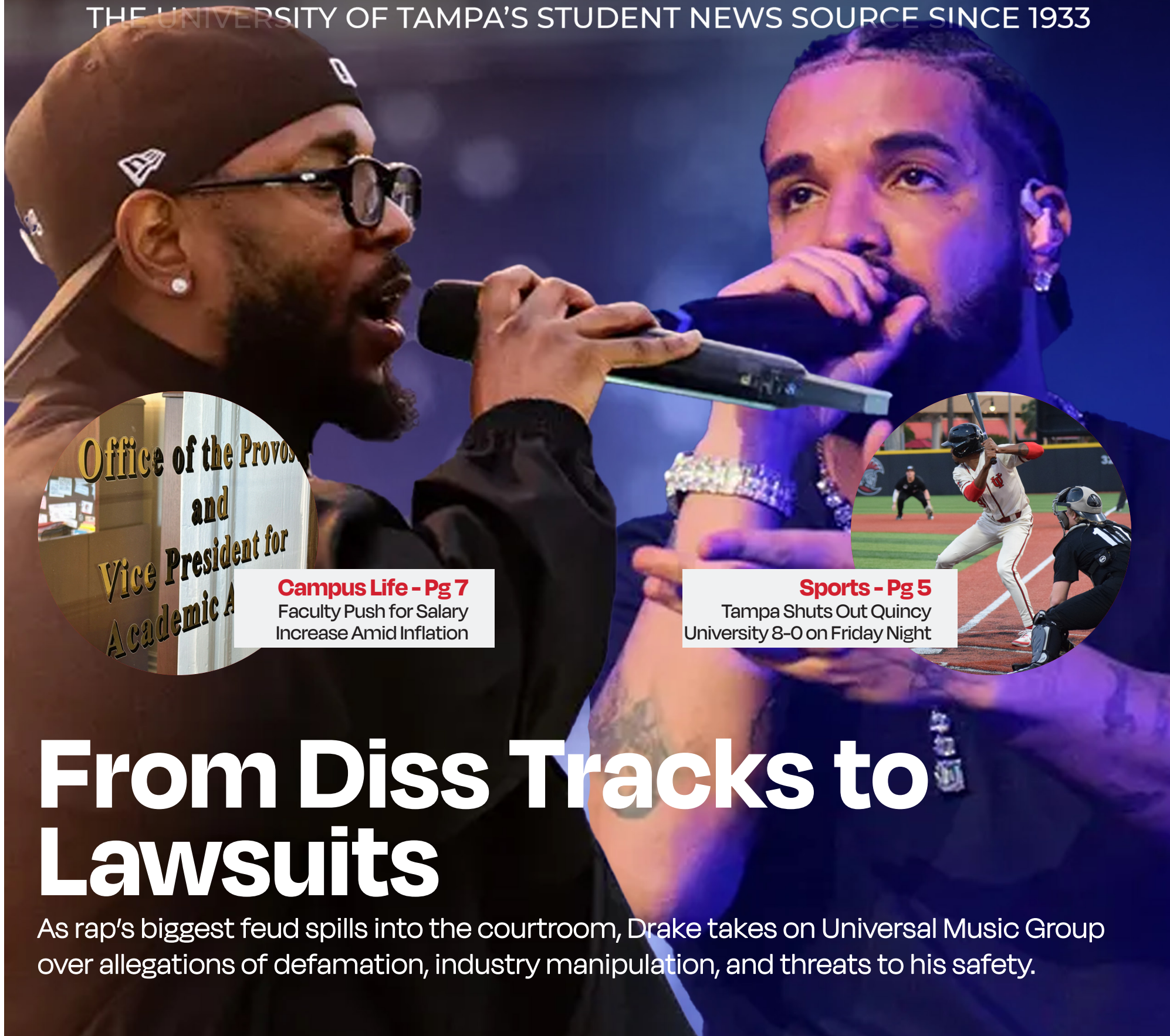
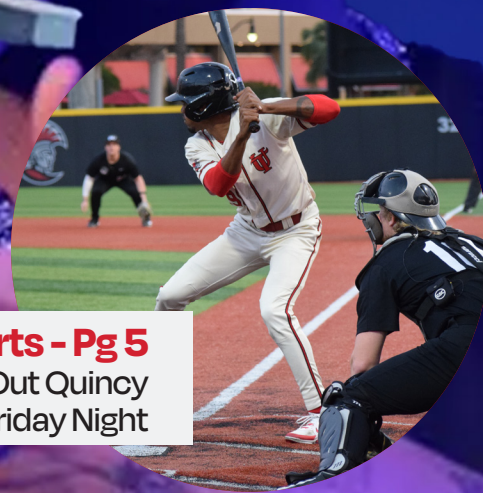


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From Diss Tracks to Lawsuits

As rap's biggest feud spills into the courtroom, Drake takes on Universal Music Group over allegations of defamation, industry manipulation, and threats to his safety.



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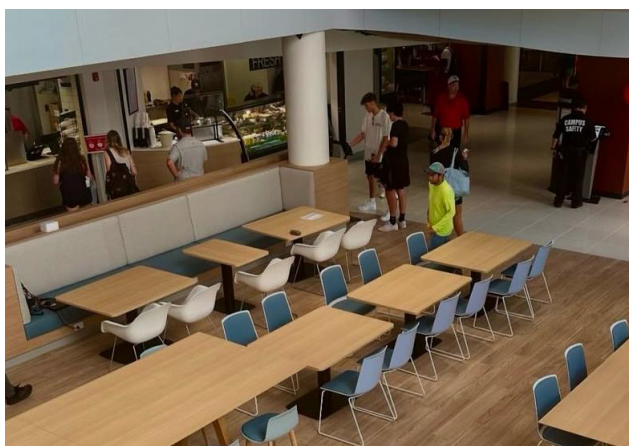


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ICE in Public Schools

Legal Battle Over Immigration Policy Intensifies

By Juan Davalos

On Feb. 12, 2025, the Denver Public School System (DPS) filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration for the policy proposal that allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to conduct operations in or around school zones.

Approximately a week before Denver filed its lawsuit, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis gave a public statement to correspondents at CBS News.

“There’s no bar in the State of Florida for conducting immigration enforcement operations,” DeSantis said to CBS.

This public statement by Florida’s governor went after the United Teachers of Dade and the Broward Teachers Union.

“There’s no bar in the State of Florida for conducting immigration enforcement operations.”

The statement expressed fears about the administration’s proposed dismantlement of the U.S. Department of Education, as first reported by NBC Miami on Feb. 6, 2025.

William Myers, an associate professor of political science and international studies at The University of Tampa, said he believes federalism protects a state’s autonomy.

However, Myers said that given DeSantis’ political ideologies, it is safe to assume the state will cooperate with the proposals brought forward by this administration.

“If a state, like Florida, orders its school districts to allow ICE to conduct an operation, then schools have to cooperate. Schools are not independent from state governments, but state governments are independent from the national government,” said Myers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the federal government has a long-standing policy not to engage in immigration enforcement actions at schools known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, Myers thinks the Trump administration seems willing to ignore or reverse this policy.

“Part of the reason for FERPA is the desire to respect people of faith and to allow children to get an education,” he said. “If dismantled, immigrants will fear they might be arrested at these places and they may not go to church or school. Everyone loses when a child is denied access to education, and it seems more and more likely this will happen.”

One of the main building blocks of the Trump 2024 campaign was bringing “traditional” values back to the American family.

“A culture of radical individualism took root, one where the responsibilities and joys of family life were seen as obstacles to overcome,” said Vice President JD Vance in his March for Life speech on current issues.

Maria Barrera is a long-standing medical interpreter now working in Lexington. Originally from Puerto Rico, she is a member of her local Latino community, working and helping many immigrant families with their citizenship. Regarding the vice president’s comments, she

said his rhetoric becomes hypocritical when the proposed policies disproportionately affect vulnerable kids.

“A teacher from my kid’s school with whom I regularly talk told me the other day how a student approached her with concerns about being separated from his parents,” Barrera said. “They should protect the kids. I don’t think they can help the families. At least let them finish school and stay until they are 18 or older. They are just children.”

U.S. congresswoman Frederica Wilson delivered a public statement criticizing the current administration’s propositions pertaining to public education.

The government representative alluded to the idea of this theoretical legislative change being a betrayal of sorts to our most vulnerable demographic: children. Specifically, she cited it as “outrageous” and “a ploy straight from Project 2025.”

“Congress must take action to ensure the U.S. Department of Education is properly funded and continues to operate as normal,” she said.

As of today, the future of schools as sanctuaries remains uncertain as potential federal policy shifts fuel debates about its morality and legality.



Photo illustration: Sarah Grillo. Photo: Christopher Dilts/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Tampa Shuts Out Quincy University 8-0 on Friday Night

By Terry Hunsicker

The University of Tampa Spartans baseball team won against Quincy University on Feb. 14, scoring four runs in the bottom of the first inning en route to an 8-0 win over the Hawks.

Skylar Gonzalez, senior starting pitcher, threw six scoreless innings and struck out seven batters, while senior third baseman Kevin Karstetter's bases-loaded triple in the first inning turned into an inside-the-park grand slam to propel UTampa towards a Friday night victory.

Gonzalez said that his location on the fastball, along with his slider and sinker working well during the game, led to his strong pitching performance.

"Get some cheap outs, jam them a little bit," said Gonzalez. "They hit it soft, gets you ground balls."

"Get some cheap outs, jam them a little bit. They hit it soft, gets you ground balls."

The weather throughout the game was windy. Following the game, UTampa head coach Joe Urso said that the wind helped make it a tough day for hitters and led to some easier outs.

"We hit some balls on the screws, but they weren't going anywhere to right field," Urso said.

Despite the conditions, the Spartans began scoring early in the bottom of the first inning. Jordan Williams, a graduate left fielder, led the game by getting hit by a pitch and stealing second and third base. However, graduate shortstop J.D. Urso hit a ground ball to Quincy third baseman David Broughton, who threw to the catcher, and Williams was called out at home.

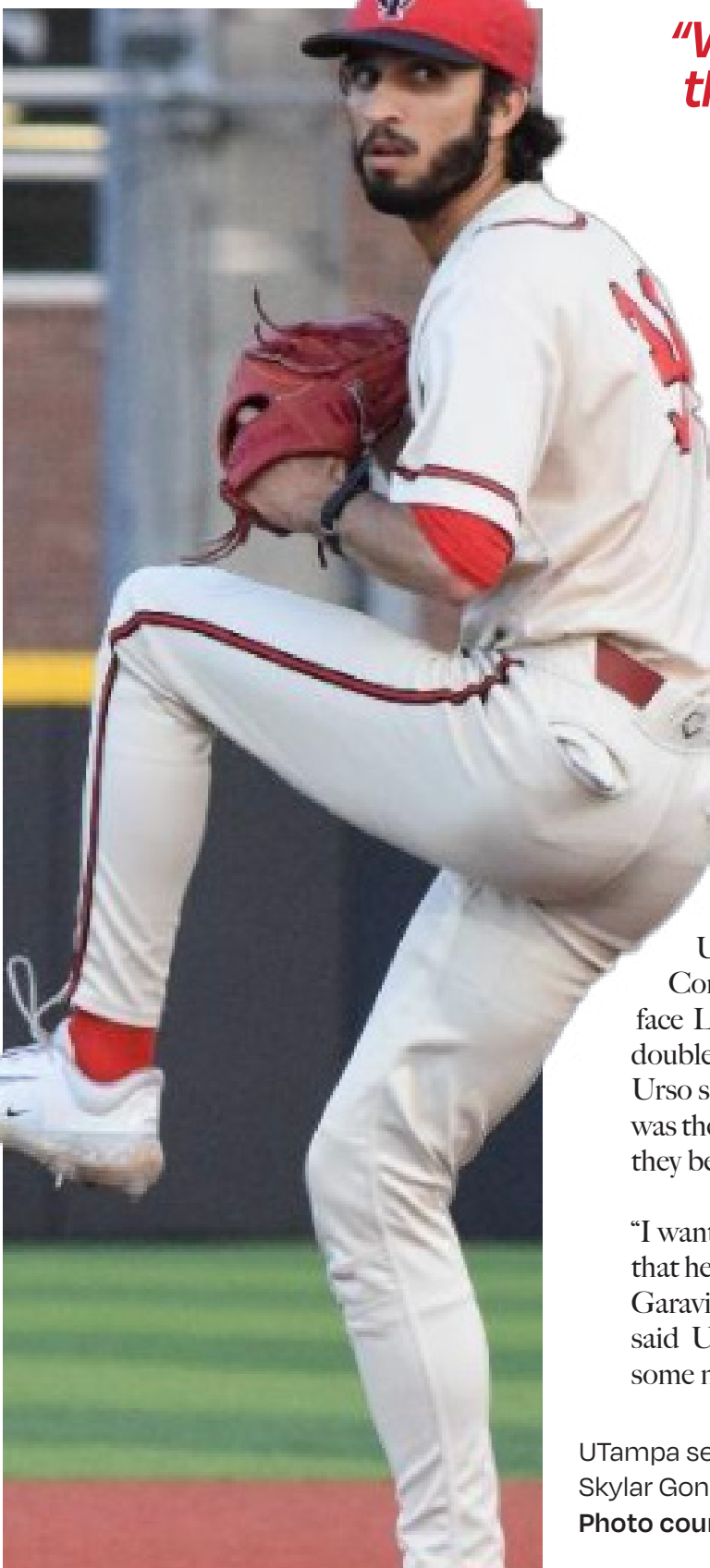
Cole Russo, senior first baseman, hit a single to advance J.D. Urso to third, and the designated hitter, junior Brayden Woodburn, walked to load the bases with two outs. Karstetter hit a ball hard

to right field, and junior right fielder Matt Mateo was unable to field the ball cleanly.

Karstetter was credited with a bases-clearing triple on the play; however, he was

also able to score off the throw to home plate, making the play an inside-the-park grand slam while giving UTampa a 4-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning.

"We hit some balls on the screws, but they weren't going anywhere to right field."



The Spartans added insurance runs late in the game, with senior right fielder Lenny Ashby scoring one run in the bottom of the fifth by getting struck by a pitch with the bases loaded. UTampa scored again in the seventh, with Russo hitting a double that scored J.D. Urso.

The Spartans settled on a final score of 8-0 after two runs were scored in the bottom of the eighth by a pinch-hit double by senior Jake Griffith and a bases-loaded walk by pinch-hitting junior Drake Harman.

The weekend series against Quincy University is the final series before UTampa begins to play Sunshine State Conference (SSC) opponents. The Spartans face Lynn University on Feb. 21 and will play a doubleheader against Lynn on Feb. 22. Coach Urso said that the weekend series against Quincy was their last opportunity to test their team before they begin conference play.

"I want to see [Jhoander] Irigoyen catch two guys that he hasn't caught, and I want to see [Santiago] Garavito catch a guy that he hasn't caught as well," said Urso. "This is the last weekend of testing some new guys out of the bullpen."

UTampa senior starting pitcher Skylar Gonzalez pitching.
 Photo courtesy of Terry Hunsicker

Faculty Push for Salary Increase Amid Inflation

By Shane Petagna

Faculty at The University of Tampa have expressed a desire for a salary increase above the annual standard salary adjustment to keep up with the rising cost of living in Tampa since the Fall 2023 semester.

An ad hoc committee appointed by the Faculty Senate to investigate faculty salaries found that full-time professors at UTampa are underpaid in order to have a livable wage in the city they teach in.

Increasing faculty salaries to combat inflation has been the main point of emphasis at the December 2024 and January 2025 Faculty Senate meetings, where presentations by the provost and president were given, respectively.

UTampa President Teresa Abi-Nader Dahlberg's strategic plan must be implemented before these raises can happen. The UTampa administration has maintained its stance that although inflation has impacted salaries in recent years, the faculty is not underpaid in relation to comparative groups of universities.

"At the end of the day, we do have faculty who cannot afford to even rent an apartment on their own here in Tampa, that they're living in a small apartment with somebody else because they don't make enough money," said Faculty Senate president Ryan Cragun.

In the Dec. 6, 2024 Faculty Senate meeting, provost David Stern gave a 15-minute presentation with an additional 10 minutes of questions & answers in front of an audience that was standing-room-only in GHS 104.

The presentation outlined facts and statistics, such as the impact of inflation and American Association of University Professors (AAUP) averages. It was cited that there was a consistent increase in all categories of the AAUP from the 2022 fiscal year to the present and that above average increases were slightly higher compared to other institutions across the nation.

The ad hoc committee and Provost had different interpretations of the data presented, with faculty feeling that Tampa has many outlying factors

compared to US News' South Region, which was one of the comparative sets highlighted. Out of the 133 universities in the region, UTampa ranked sixth.

A continued point of contention between both sides is determining what universities serve as fair comparisons to UTampa in this issue of faculty salaries. The administration based its findings on

"At the end of the day, we do have faculty who cannot afford to even rent an apartment on their own here in Tampa."

a report by The Segal Group that was presented at the start of the Fall 2023 semester, which did not account for the cost of living in Tampa and compared UTampa to "a bunch of schools," said Cragun.

Kevin Fridy, one of five members of the ad hoc committee, cited there are some really small schools included in the Segal study, such as Wheeling Jesuit University, Greensboro College, and Johnson University, which all have enrollments of less than 1000 students. Of the 167 schools included in the study, only 15 have enrollments higher than UTampa.

"If you are buying a house lots of things impact the price: how many square feet, neighborhood, amenities, etc. You don't just pay the median home price for your neighborhood, you take these things into consideration," said Fridy. "We think universities are similarly varied. [It's] best to compare UTampa to likes or control for the factors statistically where your cases are unlike."

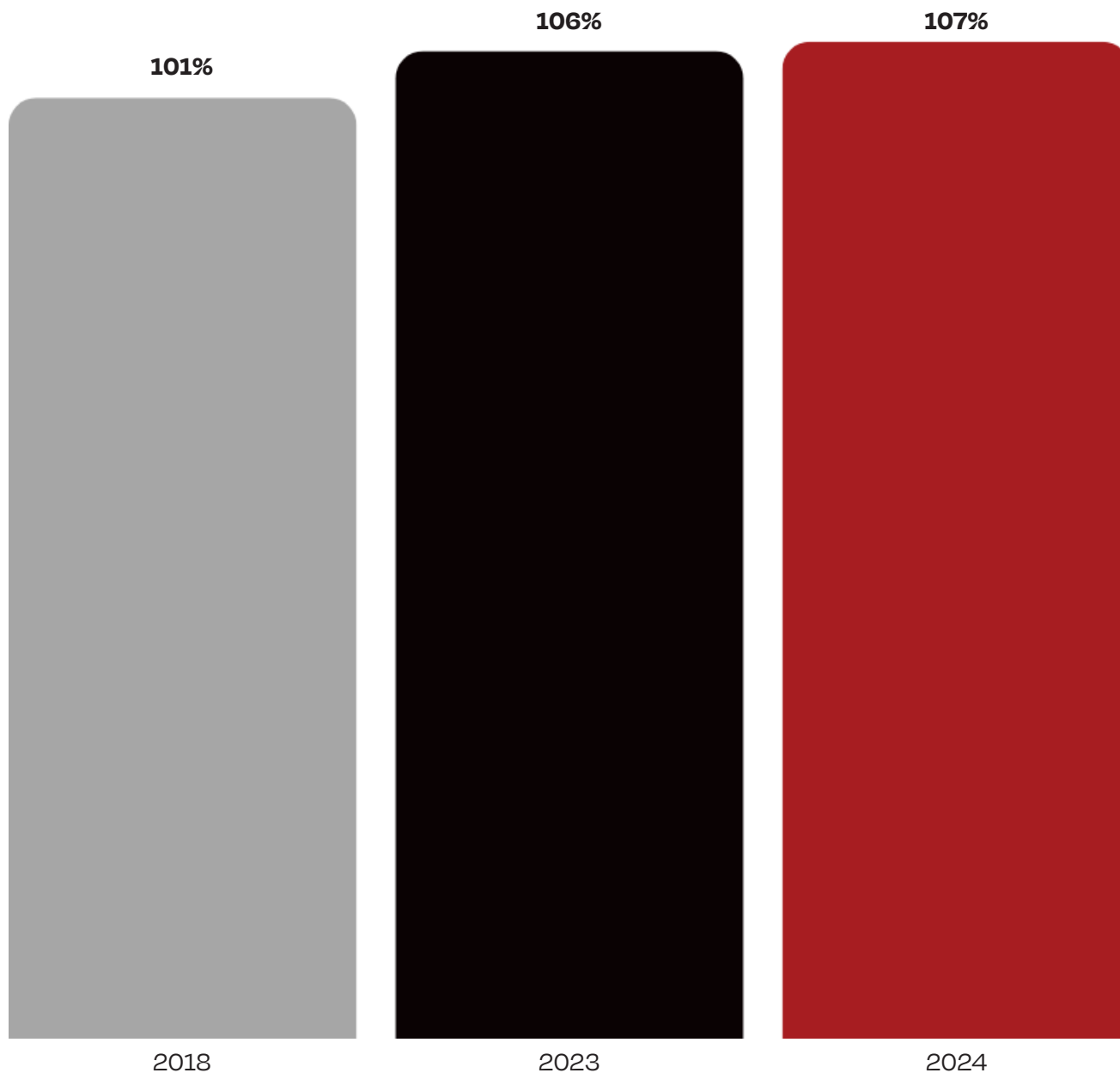
The administration warned against the ad hoc committee creating its own comparisons.

Photo of the Office of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs after the January 2025 Faculty Senate meetings



Photo courtesy: Shane Petagna

UTampa's Salary Increases



“The ad hoc committee decided to develop a new list of comparison schools, and I made clear that I could not advocate for what they were doing,” said Stern via email. “Dr. Dahlberg was ... briefed on the direction they were taking and made clear in answer to a question at the presentation that such a process of choosing one’s comparisons is not best practice in salary studies.”

The ad hoc committee cannot say there is a definitive number that salaries need to be adjusted by and that a single number does not exist. Fridy warns against paying under market, which brings about challenges in hiring faculty, spreading the existing faculty too thin, and keeping morale from suffering.

The goal of the Faculty Senate is to negotiate with the administration, where Cragun hopes to secure a gradual inflation adjustment that can satisfy the demands of the faculty.

“I think we’re underpaid for a variety of reasons. Part of it is the inflation that happened here in Tampa. Part of it is a variety of other things,” said Cragun. “What that [number] actually needs to be? I don’t know, but right now, it doesn’t seem like there’s a willingness to even consider the possibility of slowly getting us to where we might want to be.”

Another goal the Faculty Senate had and eventually achieved was to have Dahlberg talk about her strategic plan. After Stern’s presentation at the Dec. 6 meeting, Cragun spoke about a meeting with Dahlberg on Nov. 20, 2024. In that one-on-one discussion, Dahlberg was cited as not believing the faculty was underpaid and that no raises above the standard salary adjustment would come in the 2025-2026 academic year.

Dahlberg also expressed interest in attending the Jan. 31 meeting, where she gave a 30-minute presentation with no extensions allowed. She answered a set of nine questions but spent most of the time outlining UTampa’s strategies to mitigate the risk of wage compression within the university.

Dahlberg cited the importance of surplus spending, with the current pool at \$65 million. 4% of the figure goes to new staff, and \$20 million of the surplus has been set aside to combat deferred maintenance during a period called “summer refresh” that occurs annually.

UTampa struggles to raise funds because of its status as 95% tuition-dependent and low endowment, a result of very few alumni being over 50 years old, Dahlberg said in her presentation. Future initiatives include be a proposed 3.9% increase in tuition for the next few years but cannot not be radically changed as the school’s low tuition compared to “reputational privates” makes the school attractive in order to attain its student base.

Long-term goals entail increasing the university’s retention rate above 90% and graduation rate above 80%. In addition, Dahlberg wants UTampa to get into the conversation alongside R2 Carnegie schools, something that won’t happen for at least the next three years.

“UT struggles to raise funds due to its 95% tuition dependency and low endowment.”

The expected results are that endowment grows as a result of larger national recognition. Elevating UTampa’s designation from a “Regional University- South” to a “National University” would achieve the goal of higher pay for faculty. Launched initiatives to try and achieve this goal include a capital campaign for endowed scholarships, internships for all students, and AI across the university. The reasoning is to create success stories, as UTampa cannot have student success without faculty success.

Until then, Dahlberg says the university can only hire “the faculty we can afford” and maintained the stance that UTampa faculty are not underpaid in relation to comparative groups and that faculty salary and tuition price are directly related.

How Do International Students Receive Financial Aid?

By Sofia McGinnis

According to Boundless, “The United States continues to attract international students in record numbers, hosting over 1.1 million students during the 2023-2024 academic year.”

About 1/10 of The University of Tampa students are international students, and many of them are looking for financial aid to help with the cost of the university.

College students are not unfamiliar with financial aid. According to ut.edu, “90% of students receive [financial] aid. [With] \$124 million [being] in institutional aid.”

Maria Eansilva is an international student from Brazil studying psychology. She explained that the application process for international students is very similar to the application for students in the United States.

“I work on my SATs, ACTs, my english proficiency test. There are many things that I worked on extracurriculars, volunteer work. And then I use the Common App to apply,” said Eansilva.

All international students at the University of Tampa are automatically considered for scholarships. The only financial aid offered to international students at the University of Tampa are merit-based. This is due to international students not qualifying for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

“Many students still struggle to find other ways to lower the cost of tuition.”

Candice Chan, the assistant vice president of enrollment in the International Admissions department explained the difference between international and domestic students.

“[It’s] exactly the same. We review international students the same as domestic [students],” said Chan. “And then the scholarship amount they



Photo courtesy of Matthew Lester

receive is exactly the same as domestic students. The only difference with international students is depending on where they are from. ... We do require the English proficiency test scores.”

There has been a concern among many domestic students about student loans provided by the government due to the federal fund freeze and the president’s executive orders. However, at the moment, it is unclear whether or not international students will have to be concerned about their financial aid.

“We decide. But there has been a lot with the new administration,” said Chan. “There’s an executive order every other day. So I don’t really know what is going to happen in the future, but as of right now, our scholarship is based on students’ merit.”

While international students benefit from the aid provided by UTampa, many students still struggle to find other ways to lower the cost of tuition.

Mirella Losso, a nursing major from Brazil, talks about how many students in her school struggle to find financial aid when applying to many different United States colleges.

“Most of the people in my school when were applying because mostly everyone wanted to apply outside [Brazil],” said Losso. “It’s very

difficult for us to pay for college. So, everyone was just looking everywhere for as many scholarships as possible.”

It seems, like many students at UTampa, international students have to also look for other means to pay for tuition.

However, Tampa also offers support for their international students to help them settle in and to aid them in times of need.

Jessica Ramirez, an international student advisor, explains all the ways in which the University of Tampa supports their students.

“We offer an orientation program,” said Ramirez. “We also assist them [with] their employment options as F or J visa holders. ... We encourage [them] to their international student advisors ... for any decisions, concerns, or issues they may have.”

Despite the expensive tuition, international students continue to enjoy their time and education at UTampa.

“I think for the school, yes, it is really expensive,” said Eansilva. “But at the same time, ... the resources and the availability of the people that work here, I think that part is worth it.”

Helping or Hurting: Has Grubhub Made Dining Easier at UTampa?

By Matthew Conroy

University of Tampa students are having mixed feelings about the new Grubhub integration on campus. Over the summer, UTampa partnered with Grubhub to upgrade dining services on campus. With the Spartan Club redesigned with Grubhub kiosks, a new era of dining at UTampa has begun. Now that the Grubhub integration has been in effect for five months, students have been very open about their feelings about the Grubhub integration.

Senior Isabella Jeczo has lived on campus for all four years of her time as a student at UTampa. Jeczo expressed her displeasure with the Grubhub system.

“The switch to Grubhub has affected me in mostly bad ways,” said Jeczo. “Chick-fil-A is a mess because of the Grubhub, and you will not get your food for an hour after you order. There’s no communication anymore now that everything is digital, and you don’t get the connection with people that you used to.”

Chick-fil-A is a mess because of the Grubhub, and you will not get your food *for an hour* after you order.

You can order before class and have it ready to be picked up after class.

But, at the same time if you want a quick meal, *you can't* now because of the Grubhub system.

I think it actually *saves me a lot of time* compared to how it used to be.

Now, I don’t have to walk to the food spot until it’s ready, instead of waiting for 40 minutes for my food!

Face-to-face communication with the dining service staff was a key element of getting food on campus. The face-to-face aspect allowed for accuracy in orders when the student was able to correct the staff if they made a mistake.

Long wait times are also a concern for students. However, there are ways to minimize the wait time.

Popular dining options like Salsa Rico and the Aussie Grill accept in-person orders. The orders can be overwhelming during busy times like lunch rush and dinner. This can lead to longer wait times for students seeking a quick meal.

“If you use [Grubhub] correctly, it can be a good tool,” said senior Christopher Caggiano said. “You can order before class and have it ready to be picked up after class.

But, at the same time if you want a quick meal, you can’t now because of the Grubhub system. At places like Salsa Rico, where they take both in-person and Grubhub orders, it gets backed up quickly because they seem to prioritize the Grubhub orders. It also seems like the staff has difficulty using Grubhub.”

However, not everyone is upset about the changes.

Sophomore Jack Corrigan said, “I think it actually saves me a lot of time compared to how it used to be. Now, I don’t have to walk to the food spot until it’s ready, instead of waiting for 40 minutes for my food.”

At the beginning of the integration, *The Minaret* reported: “The real-time updates in the menu, though advance ordering is possible, reduce the queue and waiting time for students to get their meals. Therefore, picking up is very efficient, especially during peak lunch hours.”

“We have received feedback. However, since the start of implementation, we have resolved a lot of the issues and continue to work on any issues that may come up,” said Sharon Lerum, the operations manager of UTampa Dining Services.

“Hopefully this [wait time] issue is resolved — if it is continuing to occur, please do let me know which location so we can improve on it,” said Lerum. “With any new systems, we look forward to getting feedback from students to better improve on it.”

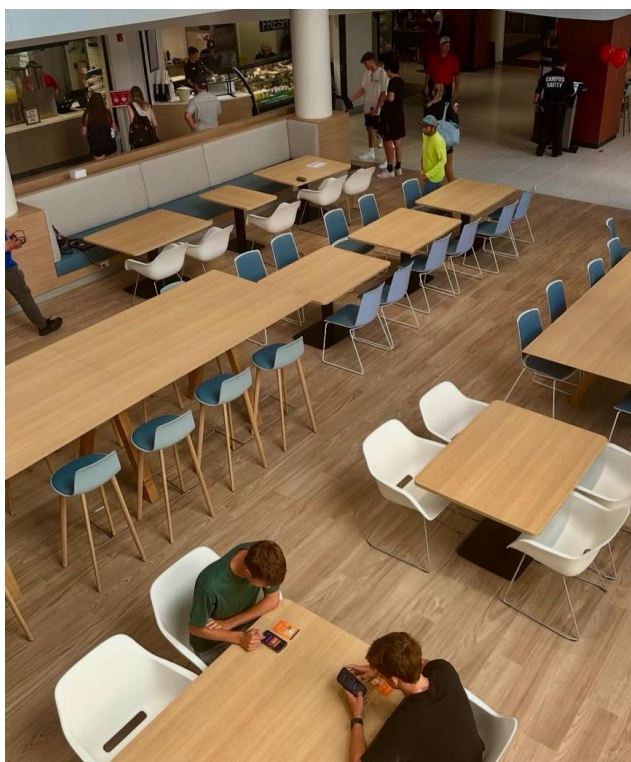


Photo courtesy of University of Tampa

Iann Dior, DJ Press Play Announced as Party in the Park Artists

By Lucia Sacerdoti

The artist for Party in the Park (PITP) was announced last week, and students are thrilled to attend the concert as soon as possible. The concert will be on Mar. 21, 2025. Doors open at 7 p.m.

Carter Ruddell, one of the concert managers of PITP and the Stage Show chair for Student Productions, told us a little bit about what the artist selection entailed and what makes it unique for students to attend this year.

"We're emailing all these different organizations to make sure that we get everything set up or making sure we have everything the artist needs," Ruddell said, "I'd say we're on time or maybe even ahead, because it's a month out, and I feel like I'm pretty confident that the planning is going good."

Ruddell said the artist announcement went well on social media, "It was pretty good. It got good outreach and a lot of likes. People enjoyed it."

Ruddell said that PITP is a great opportunity for students to attend a free concert with high attendance.

"If I'm a student ... I think it's just somewhere where I can get my Friday night started. I'm just excited to get the night going and that's a perfect way to do it," said Ruddell.

Ruddell said that if students are not necessarily interested in the artists, there are pre-show activities students can enjoy.

"And then there's a company that does fun activities," said Ruddell. "It's kind of something to go with Party in the Park, not just the artists. So there would be like free food games involved. ... Everything but nitrogen ice cream, glow cotton

candy, and more activities where students can be provided with activities that are not just like the concert itself, but like other things to do."

"The artists are going to be [a] hit. Iann Dior has a lot of recognizable songs that students know, and DJ Press Play goes around a lot of colleges around the U.S.," Ruddell said.

Students, staff members, and family can bring guests as well to the concert. For guests outside of the UTampa community, there will be a cost of \$20.

Brittany Garcia, the assistant director of Service and Leadership Development at The University of Tampa, believes this event can bring the UTampa community together.

"Party in the Park is such a rewarding experience to assist in planning"

"Party in the Park is such a rewarding experience to assist in planning," Garcia said. "The students involved are the backbone of the production. Seeing the growth and development of them coming together to coordinate something this grand is unbelievable every year. It is the highlight of the academic year, and we hope that it brings a sense of Spartan pride to our campus."

Garcia also talked about what they can look forward to the concert, "I think our students can look forward to a unique concert lineup and other fun elements all throughout Plant Park. It's going to be a great night whether students come to enjoy it or volunteer with Student Productions."

Student Productions is excited to bring this event to students every spring semester.



Photo courtesy of Student Productions.



Kendrick Lamar's Halftime Show Left Viewers Talking

By Kaitlyn Rodriguez

The 2025 Super Bowl between the Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles has now passed, and Kendrick Lamar's halftime performance left viewers talking with both positive and negative opinions. Many thought it was a great performance with various meanings behind it, while others felt underwhelmed after it.

The halftime show, sponsored by Apple Music, started off with an appearance by Samuel L. Jackson dressed up as Uncle Sam with a few-second introduction, then switched to Lamar singing a song off his new album *GNX* called "squabble up." Lamar had the stage filled with background dancers dressed in red, white, and blue dancing along with him while performing.

After his performance of the first song, he was interrupted by Jackson with him saying, "No no no no! Too loud! Too reckless! Too ... ghetto. Mr. Lamar, do you really know how to play the game? Then tighten up!"

Lamar and the dancers then proceeded to get into formation, with the dancers creating the American flag while singing his well-known song "HUMBLE." Based on this beginning of the performance, you could tell that this show was going to be loosely political.

"On the surface, it might have seemed like just another performance, but it is clear Kendrick was conveying a message many overlooked!"

These subtle messages can refer to the people who have had mixed feelings about having rap artists perform at the halftime shows. There are many rap fans out there, but you also have the other side of viewers who believe that rap is "too ghetto" or that rap artists aren't worthy enough to perform at the halftime shows and there should be more pop artists instead.

"I thought it was really good, full of easter eggs for your average Kendrick enthusiast, but I still found it was really enjoyable to watch," said junior

cybersecurity major Jose Montealegre. "I wouldn't say it was the best halftime show out there, but it was definitely good."

Lamar also performed other popular songs like "tv off" and also had a special guest appearance by SZA, with the two performing their songs "luther" and "All The Stars." Many viewers were head over heels for SZA's appearance and were looking forward to seeing the two take the stage together.

After the performance with Lamar and SZA, Jackson came back on the screen to say, "That's what I'm talking about. That's what America wants, nice and calm."

Throughout the show, there were other side comments that were made to show the point the rap artist was trying to convey. There are mixed emotions regarding the message that came across; some loved it, while others missed the point being made or felt like it shouldn't have been included in the halftime show.

"I thought the halftime show was great but am disappointed that many failed to recognize the meaning behind it," said senior marketing major Ashley Field. "On the surface, it might have seemed like just another performance, but it is clear Kendrick was conveying a message many overlooked."

There was one specific song that most viewers were waiting for and that was for Lamar to play his song "Not Like Us" that disses rap artist Drake. Both artists have quite a timeline with their feud, so the anticipation of seeing this song be performed was high.

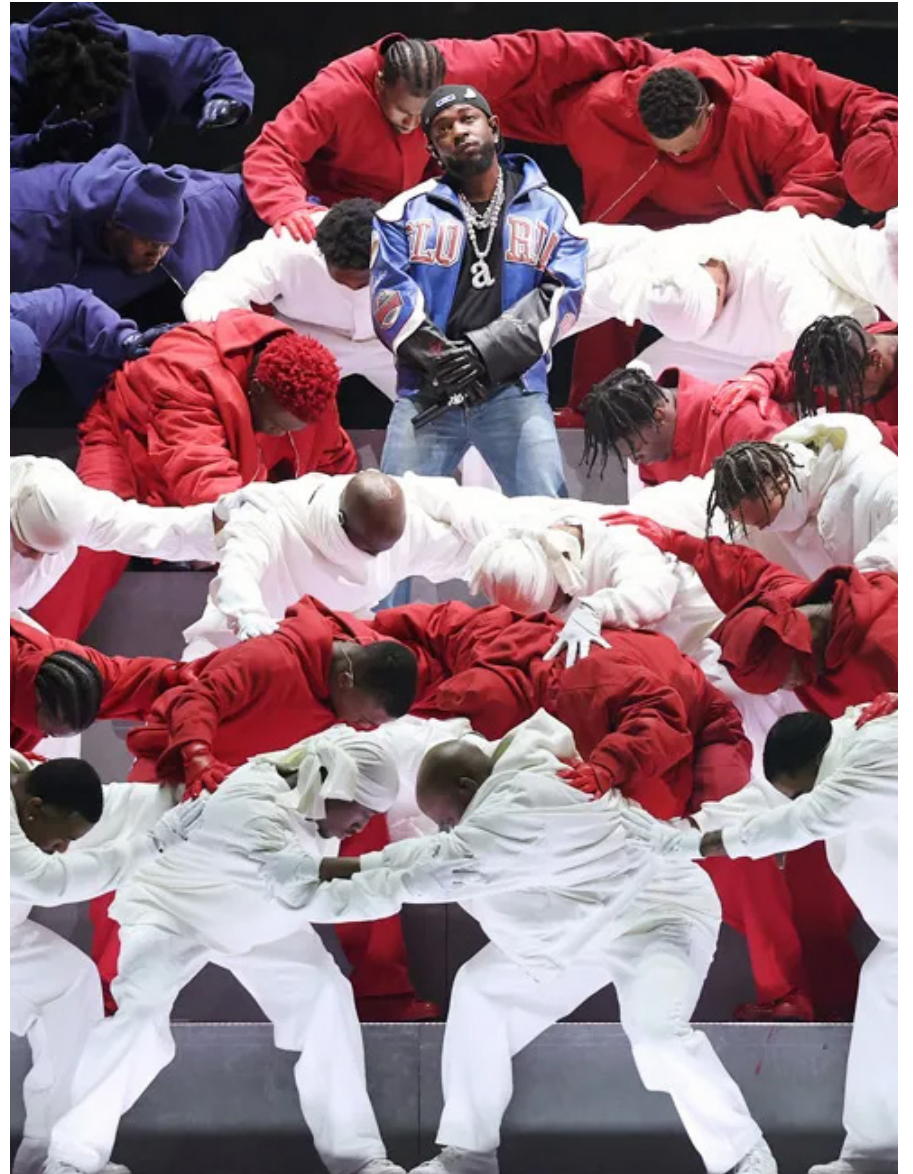


Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Earlier in the show, Lamar teased by saying, "I wanna perform their favorite song ... but they wanna sue," which refers to Drake's defamation lawsuit against Universal Music Group. Later in the show, he gave the fans what they wanted and showed that he did not care when he continued to perform "Not Like Us." Kendrick then shocked fans when he looked straight into the camera and rapped, "Say Drake, I hear you like 'em young" with the biggest smile on his face.

Lamar's halftime performance had a mix of everything while also proving a point to the audience. Between the entertainment and the loosely political aspects, it left viewers talking, whether the opinions were positive or negative.

A Timeline of the Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni Feud

By Karina DiMare

Ever since the film *It Ends with Us* was released, it's been cursed.

In August 2024, when the film was released, there was merely controversy over Blake Lively and how she was handling the release of the film. The public determined she was acting too lighthearted, capitalizing on florals instead of domestic violence.

After receiving severe backlash and disappearing for a while, Lively reappeared five days before Christmas with a 179-page complaint.

The battle began on Dec. 20, 2024, when Lively filed a complaint to the California Civil Rights Department against Wayfarer Studios. The complaint included allegations of sexual harassment and a hostile work environment on the set of *It Ends with Us*. Lively said that Justin Baldoni crossed boundaries of comfortability when improvising scenes involving physical contact.

It was reported the following morning, Dec. 21, that Baldoni was dropped from the WME talent agency. Allegedly, Lively is still with WME.

In addition, Baldoni's Voices of Solidarity Award was rescinded on Dec. 24, 2024, following the allegations, according to BBC. The same day, Baldoni took his third hit when he was sued by his ex-publicist Stephanie Jones. Jones filed a complaint in the New York Supreme Court in which she accused Baldoni and his PR team of undermining and discrediting her.

On Dec. 31, 2024, Lively filed a lawsuit in the New York Federal Court against Wayfarer

Studios, Baldoni, and his publicist. On the same day, Baldoni, along with nine others, sued The New York Times for libel because they released text messages that alluded to Lively being the target of a planned smear campaign. The lawsuit is for \$250 million aimed at the article "We Can Bury Anyone: Inside a Hollywood Smear Machine." Baldoni and his team claim that many of the messages were taken out of context, such as Baldoni coming into her trailer unannounced while she was breastfeeding.

On Jan. 3, Baldoni's lawyer, Bryan Freedman, discussed the situation in an exclusive on The Today Show. NBC's Liz Kreutz said Baldoni and his team are "not done taking legal action following their lawsuit against The New York Times," and "he plans to release even more text messages between the co-stars."

When asked if he plans to sue Lively, Freedman said, "Absolutely."

Freedman also said that their libel suit against The New York Times "will not be the last lawsuit." When asked if he plans to sue Lively, Freedman said, "Absolutely."

On Jan. 16, Baldoni sued Lively, Ryan Reynolds, and Vision PR, the firm of Lively's publicist Leslie Sloane. Baldoni accused them of defamation and claimed that they used him in a plea to escape Lively's backlash.

On Jan. 21, a video was released that is available on Entertainment Tonight's YouTube channel of three takes of the scene in which Lively claims Baldoni was acting inappropriately. Baldoni's legal team released this video in an attempt to refute Lively's claims. In the video, both actors seem to be acting normally, but Lively's feathers were ruffled when Baldoni said her spray tan smelled good.

On Feb. 1, there was a website created by Baldoni and his team containing a plethora of information pertaining to the situation. Upon opening the website called "Lawsuit Info," there are two PDFs



Photo courtesy of Jose Perez via Getty Images

labeled "Amended Complaint" and "Timeline of Relevant Events."

On Feb. 3, the co-star's lawyers were informed by U.S. District Judge Lewis J. Liman that the trial date would be moved up from March 2026 if it continued to be publicly discussed and debated. During this time, the judge warned the lawyers to refrain from making public comments about Lively and Baldoni to not sway the potential jury members.

On Feb. 4, Lively was sued for defamation in Texas Federal Court by Jed Wallace. Wallace owns Street Relations, a crisis PR firm.

The following day, in an interview with TMZ, Bryan Freedman said that he may question Taylor Swift, a friend of Lively, if necessary.

On Feb. 12, the author of *It Ends with Us*, Colleen Hoover, deleted all pictures of Lively from her Instagram. This was shocking because after the initial complaint Lively filed, Hoover made a post supporting her and her decision.

On Thursday, Feb. 13, Baldoni and Lively sent letters to the judge in New York federal court alluding that they wish to go to trial and that settling would be "premature."

While there was talk of Lively and Baldoni's creative differences on set, it is shocking that it's ending in trial.

On Feb. 7, comedian Chelsea Handler took the opportunity at the Critics' Choice Awards to make fun of the feud. She stated, "There's probably not going to be a sequel. It ends with us, guys."

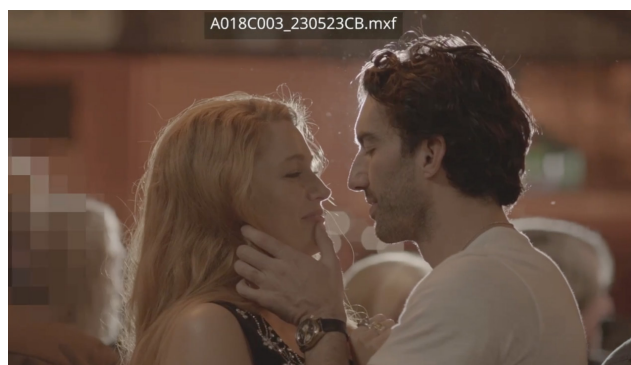


Photo courtesy of Justin Baldoni

Armature Works' Weekly Fitness Classes: Pilates with JETSET Pilates

Pause Midtown, JETSET Pilates, and F45 bring free wellness opportunities to Armature Works

By Kailey Aiken

On Saturday, Feb. 8, over fifty people gathered on Armature Works' West Lawn for a free class with JETSET Pilates and F45. The class was part of a community wellness event organized by Pause, a wellness spa opening in Midtown, Tampa.

A colorful patchwork of yoga mats and towels filled the lawn before the workout began at 10:30 a.m. The class started with 30 minutes of mat Pilates, taught by an instructor at JETSET Pilates Downtown, followed by a 30-minute high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workout taught by Tampa Heights F45 instructors.



All photo courtesy of Kailey Aiken

All skill levels were welcome, and the instructors offered modifications for any moves that beginners found difficult.

"It's way harder than it looks," said Philip Greene, a newbie to Pilates.

Greene regularly typically does CrossFit workouts and assumed Pilates would be an easy class for him.

"I was pleasantly surprised, and I'll definitely be adding more Pilates-based exercises into my

routine," he said.

Greene attends fitness classes at Armature Works regularly.

"It's a great way to get outside, get a good sweat in, and meet new people with similar interests," said Greene.

Group fitness classes are nothing new, but there's been a recent surge in Pilates and Pilates-inspired workouts in the wellness community on social media. However, a common complaint is the cost of these classes. The average price of a drop-in class is \$25-30, with unlimited memberships costing around \$200.

"I love reformer Pilates, but it's just way too expensive to do all the time," said Rachel Nathan, a college student and ClassPass user. "I can usually book three or four classes at BODYROK or [solidcore] a month, which obviously isn't a lot, so I try to come to Armature Works when they have classes like this."

The pricing of memberships and drop-ins at most studios makes attending classes consistently unattainable for many young people and college students. Fortunately, Armature Works hosts multiple free classes per week, organized in collaboration with various local studios, making it accessible for anyone to take high-quality workout classes and become part of the fitness community.

Gracie Leon, an instructor at JETSET Pilates, said most classes are almost completely full, and the same people return time and time again.

"That was the biggest shock when we started doing these," said Leon. "We see the same faces over and over again, which is really awesome for us because a big part of our brand is being a part of the community."

Leon explained how JETSET Pilates is committed to creating a fitness space that is more welcoming and less intimidating than Pilates is

sometimes made out to be.

"It can be scary for people walking in and trying to figure out the reformers and stuff for the first time, so we want to make sure our clients feel comfortable," Leon said.

Events like this allow people of all skill levels to participate in Pilates classes and are more beginner-friendly than many in-studio classes.

Collaborations between fitness and wellness brands are common in the Tampa Bay area and allow more people to access local brands, said Bob Tait, the owner and founder of Pause. He emphasized the importance of their working together and looking out for each other, and how vital it is to their businesses to connect with people in their communities.

"At the end of the day, if you're not getting out into the community and letting people know who you are, what you're all about, and putting a face to the name of the brand, it's hard for people to get a real strong connection with the brand," said Tait.

Armature Works' weekly events and classes are more than just a free workout — they are a way to build and strengthen the fitness and wellness community in Tampa in a way that benefits everyone: clients, brands, and Armature's vendors.



JETSET Instructor Kelly guiding clients

A Timeline of Drake's Lawsuit Against Universal Music Groups

By Nicolas Mezzaucella

When Drake and Kendrick Lamar first started to clash in the spring of 2024, the rap world saw what was ten plus years of back and forths turn into one of the most historic and controversial rap beefs of all time.

2013

The beef started way back in 2013 when Lamar dissed Drake and other rappers on Big Sean's "Control." After years of subliminals and sneak disses, Drake and J. Cole dissed Lamar on their track "First Person Shooter," which prompted Lamar to respond on Future and Metro Boomin's "Like That."

After tracks such as "Push Ups," "euphoria," and "6:16 in LA," it seemed that Drake and Lamar were keeping the back and forths relatively light. That lasted until Drake released "Family Matters," in which he discusses Lamar's wife and kids, prompting Lamar to respond with "meet the grahams," where he accuses Drake of hiding a child from the world, along with allegations of different crimes.

Lamar doubled down on these allegations with "Not Like Us," further accusing Drake of pedophilia, shady business practices, and exploiting the music business for his benefit. As "Not Like Us" grew in popularity and eventually reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, attacks on Drake's name and likeness began to appear everywhere, prompting Drake and his legal team to take legal action against Universal Music Group (UMG), Spotify, and others.

"Not only are these claims untrue, but the notion that we would seek to harm the reputation of any artist"

Drake first filed a petition in New York alleging that UMG and Spotify artificially inflated the streams of Lamar's diss tracks. Drake's petition accuses UMG of unleashing "every weapon in its arsenal, including, on information and belief, certain practices that are unlawful." The lawsuit

also described a shooting that took place outside of Drake's Toronto residence and a trespasser that dug under his fence to break into his home, citing UMG's actions have put his life in danger.

Just one day later, on Nov. 26, 2024, Drake filed in a Texas court where he alleges that the record label paid iHeartRadio to boost radio play of "Not Like Us" and that they knew Lamar's diss contained false allegations but failed to prevent its release.

Drake furthered his battle against UMG on Jan. 15 when he sued the label in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, accusing the label of defamation and seeking "compensatory and punitive damages."

UMG responded to the lawsuit in a statement to CNN: "Not only are these claims untrue, but the notion that we would seek to harm the reputation of any artist — let alone Drake — is illogical. We have invested massively in his music and our employees around the world have worked tirelessly for many years to help him achieve historic commercial and personal financial success."

The latest release from Drake's legal team came hours before Lamar was slated to perform at the 2025 Super Bowl halftime show.

"UMG is masquerading as a champion of artistic freedom by calling its actions merely 'entertainment,' but there is nothing entertaining about pedophilia or child abuse in the real world," Drake's legal team said in a statement to *The New York Times*. "We are confident that the evidence we will ultimately present at trial — including information we've already learned and continue to receive since filing the lawsuit — will expose UMG's gross prioritization of its own corporate profits and executive bonuses over its exclusively signed artists' well-being and the truth."

Lamar took the stage during the halftime show and performed both "euphoria" and "Not Like Us," further airing the claims he made about Drake to an audience of over 133 million people, making it the most-watched halftime show of all time.

2025



Photo courtesy of Yahoo

Doechii: The Rising Swamp Princess Timeline

By Jaide Edwards

In just a few years, Doechii, born Jaylah J'Imya Hickmon, has transformed from an underground artist to one of the most innovative names in hip-hop. With a bold persona and genre-defying sound, the Tampa-born rapper has captivated audiences worldwide. Her journey, marked by perseverance and creative evolution, has been nothing short of remarkable. Here's a detailed look at her career timeline.

1 Early Life and Beginnings

Born on Aug. 14, 1998, in Tampa, Florida, Doechii grew up in a household that nurtured her artistic abilities. With a father who was a rapper and a mother involved in the church, she was exposed to music from an early age.

According to *People*, "Doechii began spending six days a week in church, where she performed as a dancerette in a Christian marching band and sang gospel music."

As a child, she was drawn to poetry, dance, and theater, which later influenced her dynamic stage presence.

At age 11, after overcoming personal struggles, she adopted the stage name Doechii, symbolizing a rebirth of her artistic identity. According to *Revolt*, "she wrote a new identity for herself in her diary named 'Doechii' whose attitude was different and would not stand for that. From then on, she went to class wearing a tutu and never looked back."

2 2016: First Steps in Music

At 18, Doechii independently released her debut single "Girls" on SoundCloud under the name Iamdoechii. Though it did not gain widespread recognition, the track showcased her ability to craft introspective lyrics over dreamy beats.

3 2019: First Mixtape: "Coven Music Session, Vol. 1"

Determined to make an impact, Doechii released her first mixtape, *Coven Music*

Session, Vol. 1, in 2019. The project, entirely self-funded and self-released, revealed her experimental approach to music.

4 2020: Breakthrough with "Yucky Blucky Fruitcake"

Doechii's major breakthrough came with her 2020 EP, *Oh The Places You'll Go*. The standout track, "Yucky Blucky Fruitcake," became a viral sensation on TikTok, propelling her into the mainstream spotlight.

"I spent every last dime I had on that project. I came up with all of the concepts. I hired the team. I bought the studio. I drove the U-Haul truck to go take the props out. I did everything by myself at that time," she said in an interview with *Nylon*.

The song's autobiographical nature and unique flow resonated with listeners, earning her recognition from industry executives.

5 2022: Signing with Top Dawg Entertainment

March 2022 marked a significant milestone. According to *TheRoot*, "Doechii became the first female rapper" signed to Top Dawg Entertainment (TDE). TDE is home to artists like Kendrick Lamar and SZA.

Her first single under the label "Persuasive" was later remixed by SZA, further boosting her visibility. In April, she released "Crazy," an aggressive and experimental track that showcased her versatility.

In August, she dropped her second EP under TDE, *she / her / black bitch*, an unapologetic project that cemented her as a force in the industry. Her performance of "Persuasive" at the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards earned her a nomination for Push Performance of the Year.

6 2023: Festival Appearances and Acting Debut

Doechii took her career to new heights in

2023, performing at Coachella, where her dynamic energy impressed festival-goers.

She also made her acting debut in the critically acclaimed drama film *Earth Mama*, directed by Savannah Leaf, showing her range beyond music.

"This is my first time acting," said Doechii to *The Cut*. "When I was younger, a lot of what I did was auditioning, or I would do plays at the church and stuff like that, but I wasn't actually trained or anything."

7 2024: Acclaimed Mixtape and High-Profile Collaborations

August 2024 saw the release of *Alligator Bites Never Heal*, Doechii's third mixtape, which received widespread acclaim. Pitchfork described it as "her most ambitious and musically diverse release yet."

Doechii also collaborated with Tyler, the Creator on the track "Balloon" from his album *CHROMAKOPIA*. According to *Andscape*, "She performed it with him during his Camp Flog Gnaw set, screaming her bars at the top of her lungs and looking like she belongs with one of rap's biggest stars."

8 2025: Grammy Victory and Continued Influence

In 2025, according to Amanda Brown of *Her Campus*, "Doechii made history as the third female rapper—after Lauryn Hill and Cardi B—to win the award for Best Rap Album at the 2025 Grammys." In her acceptance speech, she dedicated the award to Black girls, urging them to embrace their uniqueness.

Following her Grammy win, she released the single "Nosebleeds" on Feb. 3, 2025, continuing to push artistic boundaries.

9 A Legacy in the Making

Doechii's rise to fame is a testament to her originality and perseverance. As she continues to redefine hip-hop, her influence on the industry and future generations of artists remains undeniable.

The Gulf of Mexico's Renaming is a Symbol of American Patriotism

By Reanna Fogelman

President Donald Trump aimed to make his intentions a reality in hopes of restoring the strength and glory of our country. His dreams came true after he was elected president.

The name change to “Gulf of America” took place as a symbol of the strength and legacy of our nation. The president presented this decision as a brave attempt to bring Americans together with a common national identity, showing his determination to respect the country’s history and practices.

The Gulf is a body of water on the West side of the United States of America. On Monday, Feb. 10, President Trump implemented this issue through an executive order the day he came into office.

Google Maps now displays “Gulf Of America” when it used to display “Gulf of Mexico.” Following a little behind, Apple Maps is now showing this same name on iPhones. This appeared on Tuesday, Feb. 11.

Before Trump became president again for his second term, he announced plans to make this official. Once he became president, his wish was granted to honor our nation.

“Only users in the United States will see Gulf of America, [Google] said,” a New York Times article said. “Users in Mexico will continue to see Gulf of Mexico, while people in the rest of the world will see both names, with Gulf of Mexico appearing first, followed by Gulf of America in parentheses.”

Users in different parts of the world are experiencing a different name depending on the specific region or area that they live in.

“When Mr. Trump signed the order last month, Google confirmed that it would update its maps to reflect the change as soon as the U.S. government updated the name on its official maps,” wrote The New York Times reporter Yan Zhuang.

In an announcement on Jan. 23, AP stated they will continue to refer to the Gulf by its original name while acknowledging the new one.

On Tuesday, Feb. 11, an Associated Press reporter was barred from an event in the Oval Office.

“The reporter, whom the AP would not identify, tried to enter the White House event as usual Tuesday afternoon and was turned away,” wrote David Bauder, reporter for The Associated Press. “Later, a second AP reporter was barred from a late-evening event in the White House’s Diplomatic Reception Room.”

“The highly unusual ban, which Trump administration officials had threatened earlier Tuesday unless the AP changed the style on the Gulf, could have constitutional free-speech implications,” wrote Bauder.

Julie Pace, executive editor and senior vice president of AP, called the administration’s action intolerable.

“It is alarming that the Trump administration would punish AP for its independent journalism,” said Pace in a statement. “Limiting our access to the Oval Office based on the content of AP’s speech not only severely impedes the public’s access to independent news, it plainly violates the First Amendment.”

There isn’t an issue with Trump making this decision. With him changing the Gulf’s name as the president, it strengthens our society as a whole.

However, it could be bad for journalists. If journalists continue to use the Gulf’s former name, it has the possibility of disrupting their credibility in reporting. The Associated Press stood against the decision, but using the old name would not be suitable anymore.

Though, standing against government pressure could boost the public’s view of AP.

The Trump administration did not announce these actions right away, and there was no proof that any other journalists were impacted. Trump and the media have long maintained a toxic relationship.

“As a global news agency that disseminates news around the world, the AP says it must ensure that place names and geography are easily recognizable to all audiences,” wrote Bauder.

An article published by NBC Chicago stated, “His executive order titled ‘Restoring Names That

Honor American Greatness’ also renamed Denali, North America’s tallest peak, to Mount McKinley, and was one of the first actions he took upon returning to the Oval Office early in his presidency.”

“The name change has been observed by Google and several other companies, but has been met with resistance by several other countries, including Mexico and the United Kingdom,” according to the article.

Trump claimed that the Gulf should be named after the United States because it plays a “pivotal role” in American security and economic development.

“The Gulf will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping America’s future and the global economy,” according to Trump’s executive order. “and in recognition of this flourishing economic resource and its critical importance to our Nation’s economy and its people, I am directing that it officially be renamed the Gulf of America.”

“As my Administration restores American pride in the history of American greatness, it is fitting and appropriate for our great Nation to come together and commemorate this momentous occasion and the renaming of the Gulf of America,” Trump said after declaring Gulf of America Day on Feb. 9.

Trump wanted to restore the nation and greatness of our country by changing the Gulf’s name in America.

His administration’s dedication to respecting the country’s history and tradition became more evident when he presented this executive order as a means to preserve American patriotism.



Photo courtesy of Reanna Fogelman

The New "Trooper's Law" Could Help Stop Cases of Horrific Animal Neglect

By Mary Kate Krueger



Legal Gavel. Photo courtesy of Blogtrepreneur, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

On Oct. 9, 2024, amidst one of the most devastating hurricanes in the Bay area, a bull terrier was left tied alongside the highway as flood waters rose to his belly. Scared and helpless, the poor dog was eventually found by police officers and brought to safety.

There are countless laws and bills enacted to protect children from abuse and neglect. But what laws are being put in place to protect our pets and beloved animals?

While the government has made tremendous efforts to protect the most vulnerable members of society, our furry friends have been overlooked. However, following a blood-boiling incident in Florida, a new law is being put in place to stop cases of neglect.

During Hurricane Milton, a dog named "Trooper" was abandoned and tied to a fence near Interstate 75 as flood waters ran high — sparking

"Troopers Law could serve as a milestone in the legal protection of animals during natural disasters."

controversy and public anger as a video went viral on social media. The public outrage drew Gov. Ron DeSantis' attention, where he called for action against animal cruelty.

Trooper's owner, 23-year-old Giovanni Aldama Garcia, is facing a felony aggravated animal cruelty charge, and he faces up to five years in prison.

After this devastating and enraging incident, Florida lawmakers have worked to strengthen penalties against animal abusers during hurricanes or other emergencies.

Lawmakers in Tallahassee are considering legislation that, if passed, will make it illegal to abandon a dog during a natural disaster. If taken effect, the bill would impose a fine of \$10,000 and a prison term for up to five years.

Section 828.13 reads that the "confinement of animals without sufficient food, water, or exercise; [and] abandonment of animals" would be illegal. This would provide criminal penalties to those restraining animals during a natural disaster.

This bill has gathered support from the Humane Society of the United States and the Florida Animal Control Association. These groups, along with lawmakers, are finally turning their heads to help combat cases of severe animal abuse and neglect.

While Trooper's Law could help animals endangered by natural disasters, more protections should be put in place to stop animal abuse and neglect, with or without natural disasters involved.

While Troopers Law promises compassion to animals, the state should have more responsibilities to ensure that no such incidents ever occur again. Many laws are put in place to prevent child abuse, and animals — particularly pets — should be held to similar standards.

While there is more work to come, Troopers Law could serve as a milestone in the legal protection of animals during natural disasters. However, if achieved, it should be a milestone, not a conclusion. Beyond punishment for animal neglect, the state of Florida must focus on building a solid framework for animal safety.

Pets cannot help themselves, especially in times of crisis such as Hurricane Milton. It is our responsibility as pet owners to protect our animals from horrific crimes.

Trooper, the bull terrier who is lucky to still be alive today, should serve as a reminder for us to protect our furry friends who cannot protect themselves.

The Dangerous Rise of Book Bans

This spike in book bans isn't just about controlling a student's access to books; it's about guiding the perspectives that students are exposed to.

By Ariana Fromm

In recent years, the United States has seen an increase in book bans fueled by cultural debates over race, gender, and sexuality.

Tennessee has been at the front line of this movement, restricting access to literature that challenges the traditional norms. According to the American Library Association (ALA), 4,240 books were flagged for censorship in 2023, which is a 65% increase from 2022.

These numbers represent more than just statistics; they highlight the growth of control over what young readers can access.

This spike in book bans isn't just about controlling a student's access to books; it's about guiding the perspectives that students are exposed to. By taking away books that talk about race, gender, and history, lawmakers and schools will be able to mold what the next generation learns about the world by keeping them in this bubble that society is seemingly too afraid to pop.

Besides Tennessee, Florida is another state that leads the country in book bans. A 2023 law, HB 1069, bans books that show or describe any type of sexual content and has targeted LGBTQ+ literature and books on social issues.

Meanwhile, Tennessee's Age-Appropriate Materials Act (2022) requires schools to post a list of current library materials online and allow parents, staff, and students to

give feedback and see whether or not these books should be banned from their schools. These policies reflect the effort in trying to restrict education instead of improving it.

"240 books were flagged for censorship in 2023, which is a 65% increase from 2022."

These laws make it easier for those who want to challenge and remove certain books, and they often go after stories that put a spotlight on minority groups. The consequences of these bans go beyond limiting access to books. They also create an atmosphere of tension and intimidation for teachers, students are limited to different perspectives, and difficult but necessary conversations are not discussed. The removal of books such as *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas or *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe shows that certain stories, such as those in the minority, aren't welcome.

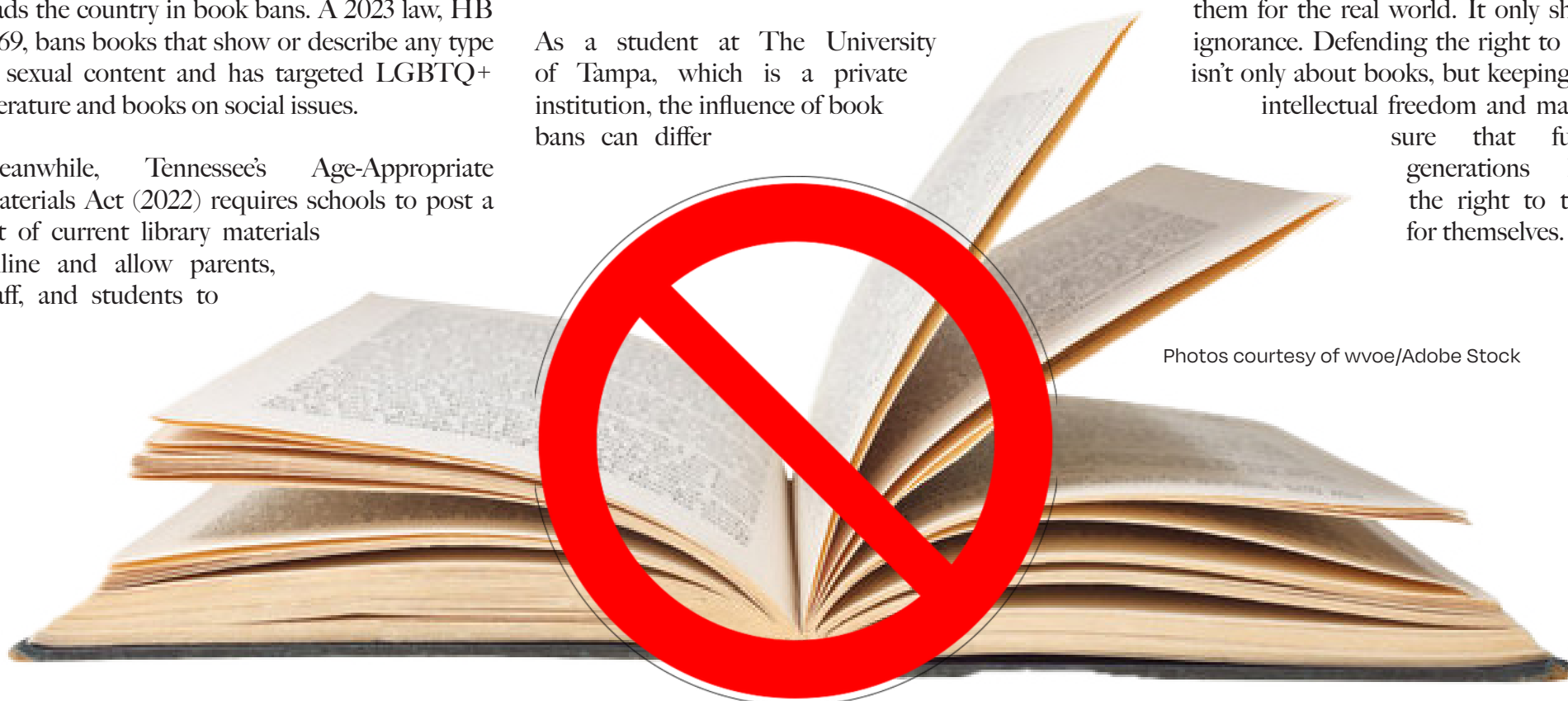
As a student at The University of Tampa, which is a private institution, the influence of book bans can differ

compared to the experiences in public schools. Private schools typically have more freedom in their education and library choices, which allows them to resist the societal pressures of the book ban movement. This has allowed me and others to learn in a more diverse environment where students can gain a wider range of perspectives without repercussions.

However, public schools are more prone to follow state and local regulations, causing the removal of books that address controversial topics. This difference suggests that students in public schools could miss out on works that encourage critical thinking and empathy. At UTampa, I've learned that the freedom to explore diverse literature can enhance your educational experience, allowing for a deeper understanding of social issues and promoting intellectual and personal growth.

I believe book bans have been used throughout history as a way to oppress. Today's censorship seeks to control what young people learn as a way of "protecting" them. However, sheltering students from the truth doesn't prepare them for the real world. It only shows ignorance. Defending the right to read isn't only about books, but keeping our intellectual freedom and making sure that future generations have the right to think for themselves.

Photos courtesy of wvoe/Adobe Stock



Service With Purpose: The UTampa Diplomats Applications Are Now Open

By Vivian Laskowski

As the 2025 Spring semester at The University of Tampa unfolds, students are settling back on campus after a much needed winter break. While on campus, you can find students walking to their new classes, grabbing food with their roommates, and embracing the sunny Florida weather by the pool or Plant Park.

Behind the scenes are the students who, along with settling back into college life, have an additional adventure to embark on this semester by becoming University of Tampa Diplomats.

The UTampa Diplomats consist of carefully selected students who serve as ambassadors to the university. Diplomats inspire, encourage, support, educate, and guide students on campus. The leadership and enthusiasm that the Diplomats all share coincide with their drive to serve the UTampa community. Their acts of service have a widespread effect on both UTampa and the surrounding Tampa Bay area. Their ultimate goal is positively impacting the lives of others. Becoming a Diplomat not only means receiving a UTampa red blazer upon induction but upholding the values and morals of what those blazers stand for: service.

Service unites smaller communities by allowing them to be a part of a bigger change.

“The [UTampa] Diplomats are a relatively small organization,” said Diplomat Jordan Haycock, a sophomore at UTampa. “We spend a lot of time with one another, and it feels like a family.”

The Diplomats organization establishes an environment where members can create new connections on a smaller scale while working towards a greater cause.

"We spend a lot of time with one another, and it feels like a family."

“The confidence instilled in me by my fellow diplomats is something that has allowed me to have

rigorous goals for myself and the organization,” said Paige Lane, a junior and executive member holding the title of vice president of events for the Diplomats.

“Holding an executive position for the UT Diplomats is a true honor. ... I am able to connect with many on campus departments, such as the President’s Office [and] Career Services,” said Lane.



Photo Courtesy of Paige Lane.

Being a member of this organization opens many doors for networking with various departments that otherwise may be more difficult to access. With that, there are unique events that the Diplomats take part in, such as the commencement ceremonies at the end of every semester.

“I believe that being able to see my fellow scholars have their special day is so heartwarming,” said Lane. “I have also been able to see and appreciate all the hard work that goes into the event by multiple UTampa Departments.”

A signature event hosted by the Diplomats is the blood drive.

“Our VP of philanthropy organizes these [blood drives] so students as well as faculty can donate blood with convenience on campus,” said Madison Curtis, a senior and executive member of the Diplomats.

Though the range of service opportunities that the Diplomats take part in varies, they collectively create an influential effect on the communities involved.

Alexandra Reed, a junior who previously served as a member of the UTampa Diplomats, shared insight on the impact the organization had on her life as well as her peers.

“Serving as a Diplomat was an incredibly transformative experience that helped me grow personally and professionally,” said Reed. “The organization allowed me to strengthen my leadership skills, improve my ability to work as part of a team, [and] develop confidence in professional settings.”

UTampa Diplomats allows members to develop and grow their skill sets that will help them through their academic careers, and in their future endeavors postgrad.

“Beyond my own growth, Diplomats play a significant role in shaping the experiences of the University of Tampa students by supporting events that foster a sense of community, engagement, and school spirit,” said Reed. “Whether it was assisting at campus-wide initiatives ... or engaging in volunteer work off campus, Diplomats consistently worked to enhance the University experiences for everyone involved.”

As Reed is no longer a current member of the Diplomats, she expresses that her “biggest takeaway from being a Diplomat is the importance of Service in Leadership, and the connections that come from it.”

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