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Mission Statement

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Pope Francis in Critical Condition

What is the Effect on the Catholic Church?

By Mary Kate Krueger

Pope Francis was in critical condition with a respiratory tract infection and other complications. The infection progressed to pneumonia in both lungs.

On Feb. 23, Pope Francis developed a low palette count, and medical professionals were concerned he may face sepsis, which is a blood infection that is a complication of pneumonia.

However, on Feb. 24, the Vatican stated that Pope Francis has slightly improved according to laboratory tests.

He has resumed doing some work despite being ill. He called the Holy Family Church in Gaza City, where he has kept in touch with almost daily since the war.

According to a *Time* article, the pope's doctor said, "The complexity of the clinical picture, and the necessary wait for drug therapies to provide some feedback, dictate that the prognosis remains guarded."

According to The Catholic Company, the Vatican follows a specific protocol following the death of a pope.

Medical professionals confirm the death through medical procedures, and then the pope's papal signet ring is burned, church flags are lowered, and Catholic communities turn to remembrance and mourning.

Since the pope is considered a spiritual figure in the Catholic church, speaking publicly about his health has been viewed as "profane" in the past.

However, the Vatican has broken century-old taboos of not discussing the pope's health, according to an article published on AOL.

On Feb. 2, two of his doctors reported it was Pope Francis himself who ordered the daily health updates to the public.

The condition of the pope has raised concerns for Catholics in other countries like the UT Catholic organization at The University of Tampa. UT Catholic is a student organization on campus that has masses, adorations, confessions, retreats, and community events for the Catholic population at UTampa.

"Every day we do the prayers of the faithful during the mass service, and we do a fasting group, as our main sole intention for Pope Francis is health," said Lawton Brinkman, the president of UT Catholic.

"There's also been a lot of discussion on what happens when the pope dies, who they will select to become the next pope, and what happens during that interim period," said Brinkman.

If the pope does die, the Roman Catholic Church will have a "conclave," which is an assembly of cardinals for the election of a pope.

"All the cardinals under 80 go into the sistine chapel where they vote, generally around four times a day, and this is a lot of political movement," said Brinkman.

"There's also been a lot of discussion on what happens when the pope dies"

"When I was visiting Rome, I was able to see Pope Francis in person during a service, which makes the possibility of his death more disappointing," said Brianna Graham, a member of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in downtown Tampa.

The most recent update of the pope's condition was released on March 1, at 1 p.m., stating that he is resting and drinking coffee the morning after a sudden respiratory episode, according to CNN.



Photo courtesy by Lon Thein Wiki Media Commons

Tampa Bay Sees Dip in Opioid Deaths

Is the Decline Sustainable? Experts Weigh In

By Grace Gallowitz

After years of rising numbers in opioid-related deaths, a new data study shows these fatalities are declining in the Tampa Bay area.

“For the first time actually in a while, we’ve seen the first significant trend of a decrease,” said William Sullivan Angulo, the communications director for Live Tampa Bay. “Which is exciting because what we’re seeing are the early numbers specifically for the first half of 2024.”

Live Tampa Bay works to reduce opioid deaths through data analysis, community partnerships, and initiatives aimed at improving access to resources and treatment.

“We’re currently, from the data we’ve been able to aggregate, looking at approximately a 9.4% reduction down from the pandemic era,” said Angulo.

The factors that contribute to the reported decrease are diverse, according to Angulo. Naloxone, a drug used to treat opioid overdoses, has become more widely distributed and available. Community outreach efforts and greater access to drug addiction treatment have also been developed.

“We know that Narcan is one of the most effective interventions that we can make in terms of providing it and making it readily available and training people so that they feel comfortable administering it,” said Angulo. “Because it’s much about the availability; it’s also about employees at a business feeling comfortable administering it.”

However, there are gaps in the approach of using Narcan. It could limit its long-term effectiveness. Angulo said that while Narcan is more widely available, not everyone knows how to use it or feels comfortable administering it in an emergency.

“We know that Narcan is one of the most effective interventions that we can make right, in terms of providing it and making it readily available and training people so that they feel comfortable administering it,” said Angulo.

To reduce repeat overdoses, organizations like Live Tampa Bay and the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay

“Many of the Tampa Bay region’s eight counties had a greater spike in opioid deaths in the first half of 2021 than in 2020”



Photo courtesy by Leah Burdick

are conducting public training sessions to educate people on recognizing overdoses and properly administering Narcan.

The Tampa Bay Partnership, which tracks regional health statistics, reported that Tampa Bay’s opioid overdose rate was significantly higher than both the state and national averages in previous years.

After three years of relative stability, overdose fatality rates rose again in 2019 and 2020. According to the Tampa Bay Partnership, many of the Tampa Bay region’s eight counties had a greater spike in opioid deaths in the first half of 2021 than in 2020.

“Over the period from 2019, with 310 overdoses, we increased to 634, which was our peak in 2022,” said Dr. Kelly Devers, medical examiner for Hillsborough County.

The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay’s TransCare Medical Transportation Division also launched a new community paramedicine program to provide free support for substance use disorder.

Paramedics will deliver medication-assisted

treatment (MAT), including daily buprenorphine doses, alongside behavioral therapy to help treat opioid addiction.

“We’re optimistic that this is trending downward and we’ll keep trending downward,” said Devers. “It seems like the fentanyl test strips and the Narcan are really making a big difference because Narcan is now pretty widely available and it’s, you know, passed around in different groups.”

While the decrease in fatalities has been shown, experts warn that continued efforts are necessary. Fentanyl remains a major concern, as it is still the leading cause of overdose deaths.

“So for us that seems to be where the downward trend is coming from. So I’m hoping that that will continue,” said Devers.

The drop in opioid deaths is encouraging, but experts said the issue is far from finished.

Local organizations advocate for more funding and community engagement to guarantee that harm reduction strategies reach people in need.

Prospects Universe

How Ryan Barry is Revolutionizing College Baseball Recruiting

By Emily McLaughlin

Prospects Universe is a college baseball recruiting service dedicated to helping uncommitted high school students connect with college coaches and navigate the recruitment process. Founded by Ryan Barry, a sophomore at The University of Tampa majoring in business information technology, the program has helped over 200 players gain interest and opportunities at various universities.

Barry started this program from personal experience. Having gone through the recruiting process himself, he noticed the challenges and persistence involved in recruiting to the college level. Barry created this program to make it easier for players who are trying to commit by providing networking opportunities with college coaches, recruiting video help, and custom workout programs.

Most recruiting services charge thousands of dollars, making it harder for athletes to access opportunities. Barry built a model that's more affordable and accessible, ensuring that cost isn't a barrier to landing a dream scholarship.

Prospects Universe provides a hands-on, personalized approach. Barry does not just offer advice; he actively reaches out to college coaches on behalf of his players, leveraging his trusted network of 200+ college programs.

With 35,000+ engaged followers on Instagram, including coaches, players, and parents, Prospects Universe provides unmatched exposure that most recruiting services can't offer. Their goal is simple: to maximize every player's opportunities and connect them with schools where they can succeed — without the unnecessary costs and false promises of other services.

The inspiration for Ryan's business was from his own personal recruiting journey. He struggled to get seen in front of the programs he wanted to go to, and he had no one who knew a lot of coaches.

"If I just had someone like what I was doing now back when I was in high school, it would be perfect," Barry said.

Barry's motivation to start Prospects Universe also came from a longtime friend he played travel ball with for five years. His friend was an outfielder and was pretty fast. But when Barry asked why he did not want to pursue college baseball, his friend was unsure about the idea.

Wanting to help, Barry filmed and edited a recruiting video for his friend, later posting it to Prospects Universe's X page. The next day, the video received 3,000 views, and a week later, his friend had five offers and committed to a Division II school in Tennessee with a 50% scholarship. His friend continues to play at the school.

Realizing how much success Barry produced for his friend, he realized how much potential Prospects Universe can have, officially leading him to launch the program.

First, Barry started to speak with several parents and kids at a field complex called Diamond Nation in New Jersey to get Prospects Universe out there for others to see. He used his social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, X, and TikTok) to amplify his program by filming highlight videos for players for a small fee. His entrepreneurial spirit powered his hustling energy.

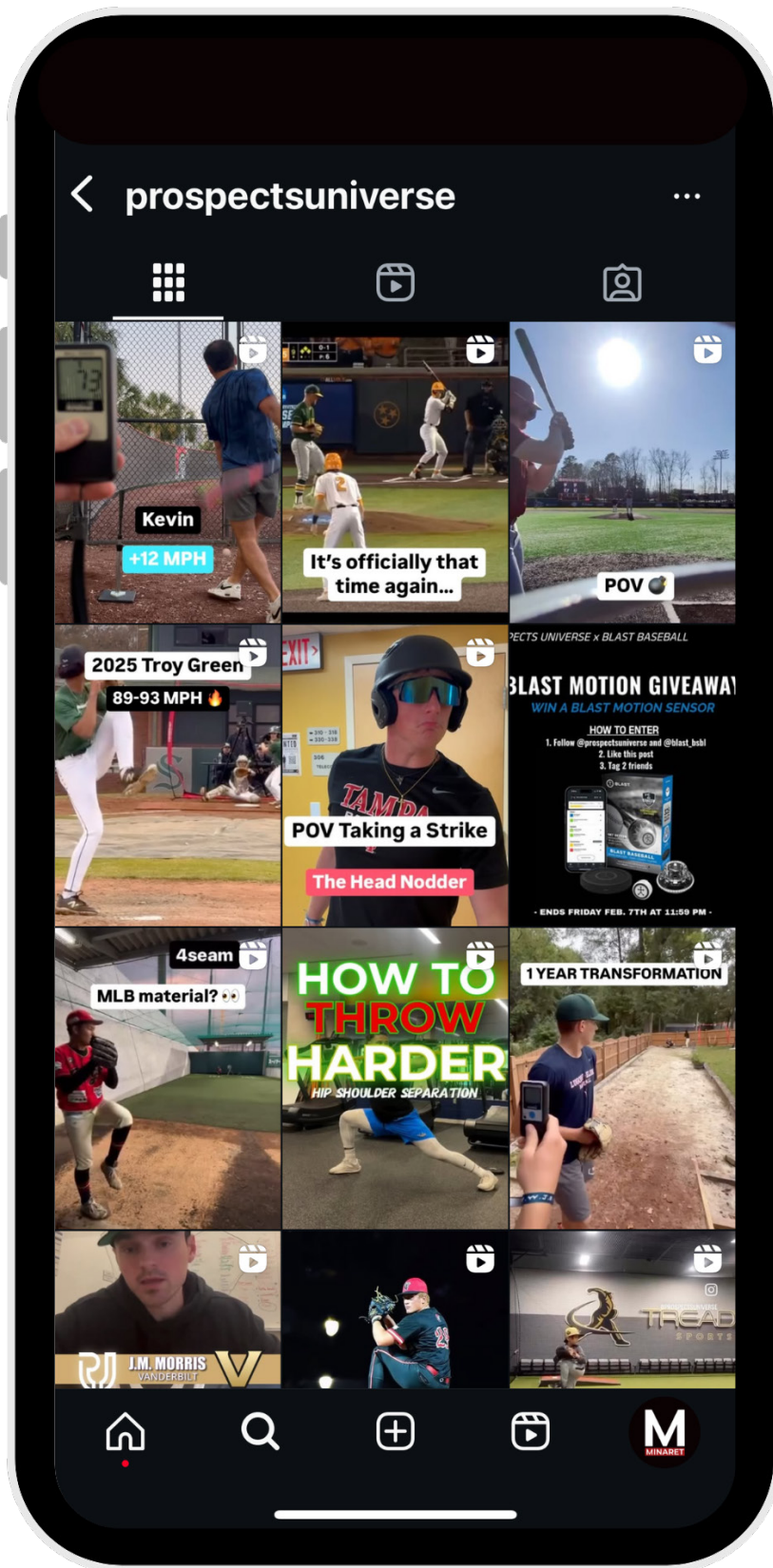
"With those videos, I was able to leverage that and got more people interested," Barry said. "I was getting people from around the world sending me their videos for me to post."

Over time, Barry expanded his network and formed connections with more than 200 Division I coaches. By the summer of 2023, Barry spoke with coaches directly, acting as the middleman between players and colleges.

In the fall of 2024, Barry started interviewing college coaches at Georgia Tech, Stanford,



Photo Courtesy of Corey Lyle.



Prospects Universe's Instagram page is his main attractor with over 35K followers and 1,126 followers on X.

Oklahoma, and Vanderbilt. These interviews offered recruiting advice and were posted on the Prospects Universe social media pages.

Barry's success on social media has become a key factor in his growth. Prospects Universe's Instagram page is his main attractor with over 35K followers and 1,126 followers on X.

"At one point I was posting like seven reels a day," Barry said. "One video of mine has gotten over 20 million views."

Barry's content has been featured on Sports Center, MLB, and MaxPreps. He has several affiliated partnerships with baseball brands to promote their products with his large following. Barry does baseball product promotional videos with Tanner Tees, Pocket Radar, CleanFuego, and ArmCare.com.

As the program continues to grow, Barry said he manages everything himself. Learning how to network through his classes at UTampa has made it easy for him to do his work.

"I'm not at the point right now where I need to hire anyone else," Barry said. "It's just not worth it."

Barry's biggest challenge is gaining the trust of the players he works with. Some coaches prefer to handle recruitment themselves, making it difficult for Barry to connect with players. However, Barry said he uses his social media platforms as his way of outreach, sending thousands of texts and emails daily.

Barry said his focus is "getting more warm leads instead of cold leads."

Now, Prospect Universe operates with a structured recruitment process.

Players submit a form with their height, weight, GPA, academic record, preferred schools, and baseball metrics. Barry reviews the form, requests videos, and helps create higher-quality content if needed.

After the recruitment fee, which can vary, Barry contacts colleges until the players are committed. Unlike other recruiting services, Prospects Universe is much more affordable, making it accessible for players looking for opportunities at the college level.

Last summer Barry successfully helped a UTampa

baseball player enter the transfer portal and commit to a Southeastern Conference (SEC) school. Barry said it was a really big moment for the program.

Barry said the business school at UTampa is great, and the mentors he's received from the Spartan Accelerator program have given him tips on how to grow Prospects Universe.

"I don't think my business would be where it's at unless I came to The University of Tampa," Barry said.

Barry envisions Prospects Universe expanding by doing tournaments and showcases and helping players get recruited at these events, continuing to build exposure for himself and the players.

Beyond recruitment, Barry continues to be involved in the local baseball community. He offers free pitching lessons to Little League and high school players within the Tampa area, including Alonzo, Jesuit, Plant City, and Hillsborough Community College.

"The main reason is to help the kids with pitching," Barry said. "Not to get any benefit, just to volunteer."

As Prospects Universe continues to grow, Barry remains committed to helping athletes pursue their college baseball dreams while pursuing his vision as a leader in sports networking.

Prospects Universe's Logo
 Photo Courtesy of Prospect Universe



UT Baseball Dominates No. 15 Ashland in 8-0 Shutout

Spartans Score Five Runs Early to Secure Statement Win

By Terry Hunsicker

The University of Tampa men's baseball team won 8-0 over No. 15 Ashland University on Friday, Feb. 28, scoring five runs in the first two innings while pitching a shutout.

Graduate left fielder Jordan Williams had four base hits and stole four bases during the win, accounting for two runs and one RBI. Senior starting pitcher Skylar Gonzalez pitched six innings, striking out seven batters and allowing no runs on three hits and one walk.

"Great Friday night win against a damn good team"

"Great Friday night win against a damn good team," said UTampa head coach Joe Urso.

Ashland University Eagles head coach John Schaly said the team experienced issues when flying to Tampa from Ohio. Their flight was delayed by an hour, not all their luggage arrived, and they only received one van instead of the expected four.

"We're ready to play now. Travels done, we're here, we're ready to play," said Schaly.

The UTampa Spartans stole seven bases during the game, four by Williams, two by senior third baseman Kevin Karstetter, and one by sophomore center fielder Maddox King. Four Spartans were caught stealing, and one was picked off while at second base.

"Their catcher was really good, and we knew that, but I didn't want to stop," said Urso. "I didn't want to slow down what we've been working at."

Williams said that he attempts to steal a base whenever he gets the opportunity.

"It works out sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't," Williams said. "Just not really having any fear out there."

Williams was nearly picked off during the second inning, but he managed to steal second

when the pitcher, senior starter Brendan Beaver, threw to the first baseman while Williams ran to second base. After junior second baseman Brayden Woodburn had walked, Williams scored on an RBI single from graduate shortstop J.D. Urso.

"I was like, Oh snap, oh snap, oh snap," said Williams. "Then the ball just never came."

The Spartans took an early lead in the first inning, scoring three runs, two unearned, after an error by Ashland junior second baseman Gavin Dobbels allowed Williams to advance to second and Woodburn to reach first base safely. J.D. hit in Williams with a single, and senior right fielder Edgardo Villegas collected two RBI with a single that gave Tampa a 3-0 lead in the first inning.

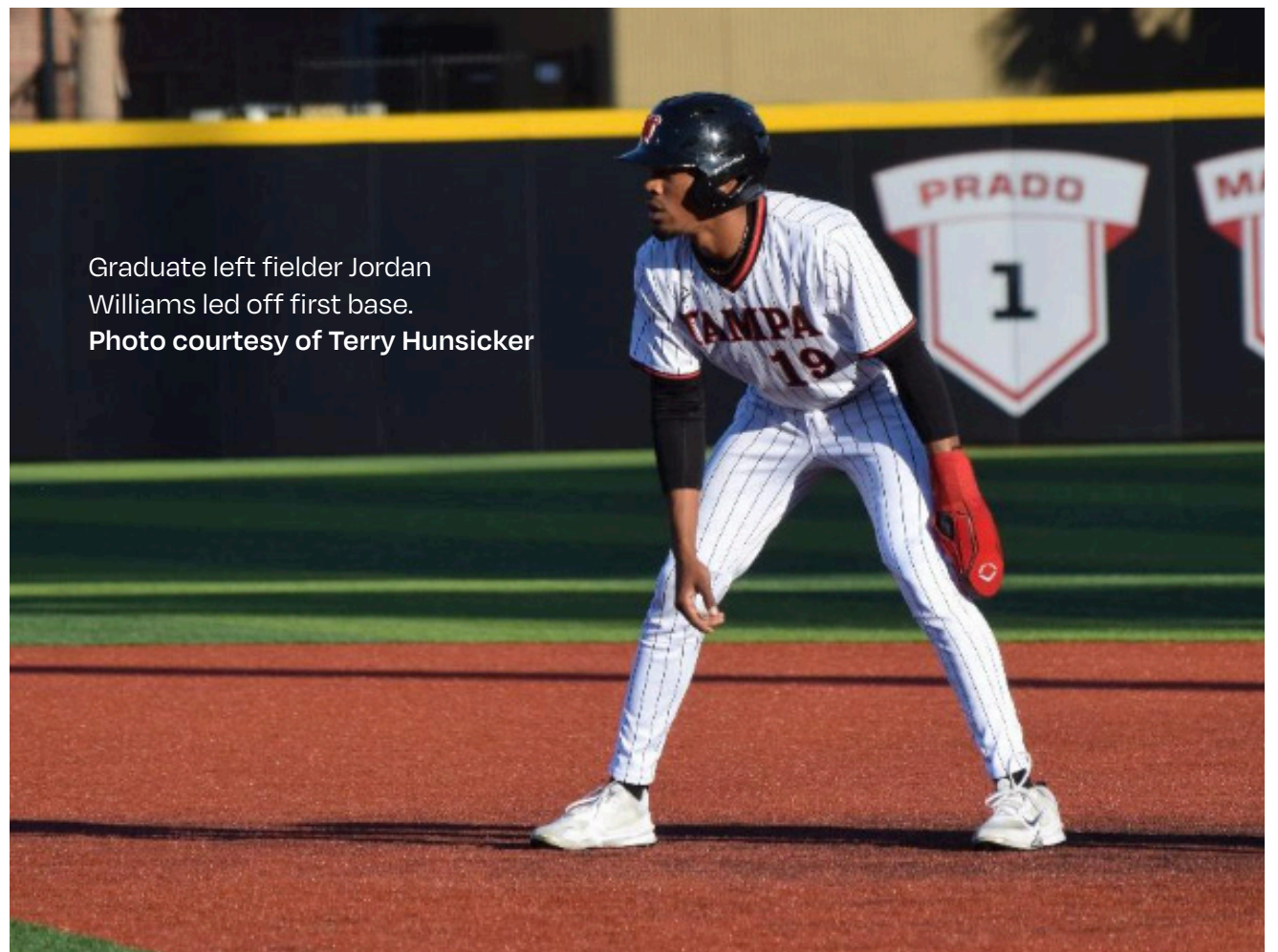
Senior relief pitcher Eli Thurmond began the seventh inning for the Spartans, allowing one hit and one walk over the final three innings and striking out two batters.

Gonzalez had thrown 93 pitches through six innings, despite allowing only four baserunners.

Senior first baseman Cole Russo and senior designated hitter Mike Valdez were pinch-hit for during the bottom of the eighth inning after both had gone 0-4 with three strikeouts at the plate. Graduate first baseman Joe Stella hit for Russo, hitting a double to right center field and scoring after a single by Villegas.

Freshman A.J. Graham hit for Valdez, striking out swinging. Urso said that he was looking to get Stella some at-bats, but others were hot at the plate.

The Spartans begin an eight-game road trip on March 7, traveling to face California State University San Marcos in a four-game series that ends on March 10. They then travel to face Sunshine State Conference opponent Palm Beach Atlantic University in a three-game weekend series on March 14-15 and finish the road trip on March 18 against Albany State University.



Graduate left fielder Jordan Williams led off first base.
 Photo courtesy of Terry Hunsicker

Top NFL Offensive Free Agents in 2025

Who Are the Biggest Names Hitting the Market This Offseason?

By Montanna Chambers

After years of rising numbers in opioid-related deaths, a new data study shows these fatalities are declining in the Tampa Bay area.

“For the first time actually in a while, we’ve seen the first significant trend of a decrease,” said William Sullivan Angulo, the communications director for Live Tampa Bay. “Which is exciting because what we’re seeing are the early numbers specifically for the first half of 2024.”

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Photo Courtesy of AthlonSports.

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treatment (MAT), including daily buprenorphine doses, alongside behavioral therapy to help treat opioid addiction.

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Local organizations advocate for more funding and community engagement to guarantee that harm reduction strategies reach people in need.

Andrew Carson's Journey from College Transfers to the New York Mets

By Emily McLaughlin

Andrew Carson, a recently graduated student at The University of Tampa, signed with the New York Mets.

Carson started at Bowling Green State University, a low-level Division I college in Ohio. After a short time there, Carson realized it was not the right fit for him. Seeking a better opportunity, Carson decided to transfer to a junior college called Lansing Community College to maintain eligibility and seek better recruiting opportunities.

"It was the best move I ever could have made," said Carson. "It forced me to be my own advocate and take my career into my own hands."

This move allowed Carson to become a better person and player; as Carson's confidence grew, so did his opportunities. Eventually, Carson ended up at Michigan State University. While he had a good career at Michigan State, he had one more year of eligibility left, but the Division I program could not honor that due to COVID-related restrictions. This unexpected turn led Carson to UTampa, a powerhouse for Division II baseball.

"That's how I ended up getting in contact with Coach Urso over at The University of Tampa," Carson said. "Lucky enough, they had a spot for me, and I was able to slide right in."

Despite the disappointment Carson felt with leaving Michigan State, he said it was the best move he could have made. It not only allowed him to win a national championship but also brought him lifelong friendships and valuable relationships.

"Although I didn't choose for that to be my move, ending up at The University of Tampa couldn't have worked out any better," Carson said. "It got me in front of a lot of different eyes that got me to where I am now."

Carson's transition to UTampa was a change he did not expect; academically and socially, it was a completely different experience for him. Coming from a school with over 200-person lecture classes and minimal attendance requirements, he found himself in smaller, interactive classes.

"I found myself working so much harder," Carson said. "I will always thank The University of Tampa for making me step out of my comfort zone and force me to become a better communicator."

Now that Carson's college career is behind him, he is now looking ahead toward his professional journey. Carson said he feels pumped and excited to be able to get over the hump of what felt so hard to get over to get into professional ranks.

"Although it's a completely different level, it's still the same game," Carson said. "I'm just trying to enjoy it like I have my entire life."

Carson credits the professors at UTampa for their personable approach to understanding college athletes' lives and the numerous coaches who have shaped him into the

player he is today, specifically Coach Urso. He also has inspiration from his father, Jimmy Carson, who played in the National Hockey League (NHL) for 10 seasons, giving Carson valuable insights into the world of sports.

"He's my hero," Carson said. "It was cool to grow up with him as a dad outside of sports and in sports."

Growing up, Carson had a sports-driven household. Carson's older brothers and younger sister all played basketball and soccer at high levels. Carson gives credit to his mom for always being there for them when they played sports growing up.

"We've had sports on the TV. We've been playing sports out in the backyard. That's just been our whole lives," Carson said. "My first memories are playing miniature hockey and soccer in the basement, swinging the baseball bats, and just causing havoc as a kid."

Being a late bloomer, Carson did not start to gain attraction from low-level colleges until his senior year of high school. Once Carson decided to pursue baseball at the highest level, he committed to his full potential.

Now, as Carson begins his professional career, he feels ready for what lies ahead.

"Training has been fun. A ton of people are still showing up every single day," Carson said. "My former teammate from The University of Tampa Anthony Nunez got in and we're back to practicing together, so it gives me that familiar family aspect."

For Carson, the biggest challenge is staying in the moment and being present with what he can control rather than what he can't.

"It is the same game, but now I get to do it in an MLB organization," Carson said. "I am so thankful for the opportunity!"

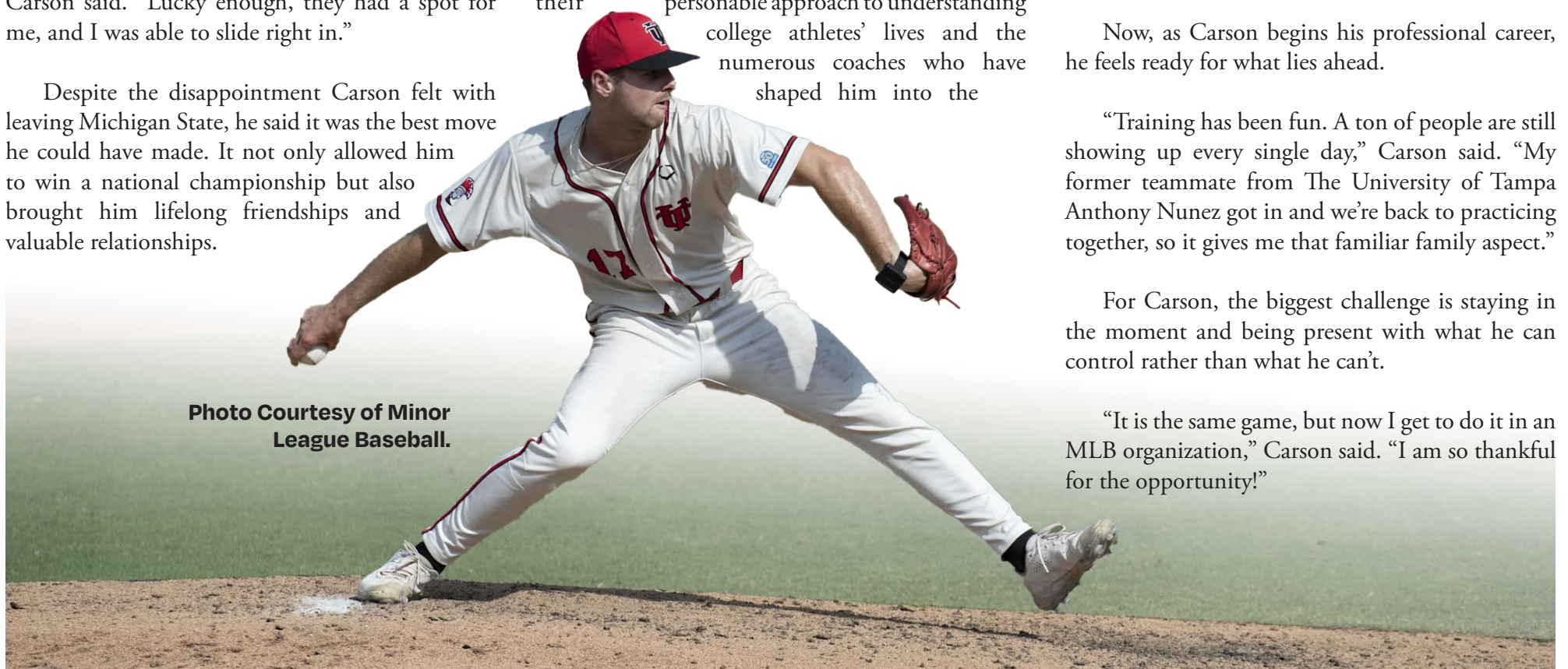


Photo Courtesy of Minor League Baseball.

Spartan Olympics

UT's Campus Comes Together for Competition & School Spirit

By Montanna Chambers

Student Productions is hosting a Spartan Olympics on Sunday, March 2, from 2-4 p.m. in Pepin Stadium.

The event, organized by Kyle Gianni, community engagement chair for Student Productions, aims to entertain by blending sports and entertainment while promoting student involvement.

"This event is bringing together a whole bunch of different clubs, and they'll hopefully be competing against each other," said Gianni. "Ultimately, it's also a way for organizations to table and boost their own organizations."

Gianni hopes this will be an annual event that Student Productions hosts with Campus Recreation, as both have similar goals, and this would be the perfect event to hold every year for students to get to know each other as well.

Games and Competitions

Students can expect a variety of games to participate in by teams such as cup stacking, test of the mind, relay, and dodgeball. These games are quick and require a lot of teamwork to see who the best team out there is alongside UTampa Sports.

In cup stacking, each team will be tasked with creating a perfect pyramid with 45 cups. Every member will be tasked with doing one row. If the cups get knocked over accidentally, they must keep going until they have used all 45 cups. There will be a referee navigating the teams at a time.

"Ultimately, it's also a way for organizations to table and boost their own organizations"

Test of the mind is a break from physical activity, offering a mental challenge.

"We're going to have a huge crossword puzzle on different Tampa Bay and UT history," said Gianni. "The top two chains out of those three activities will face off in a dodgeball match to determine the grand trophy winner."



Gianni also encourages having spectators at the event to cheer on the teams, as they will need that while they are playing. Students are welcome to watch the students play and represent their team.

The competition will conclude with a dodgeball match, where the two final teams will battle for the Spartan Olympic championship. Gianni said this will be an event where he encourages students to have fun and make this a friendly competition.

Open Participation of School Spirit

"Although clubs are being specifically invited to come out and table and compete, anybody can come to this event," said Gianni. "That's a big thing I can emphasize. The games are designed to be fair to all different teams, not just sports clubs."

Gianni hopes to make this event a tradition for students every year to increase the Spartan spirit in the university.

"A few years ago, there was a lack of school spirit, but it's slowly coming back," said Gianni. "We're

embracing the colors of the school and mascot in different events."

He also said that this event is a good way to promote the different sports that UTampa provides on campus. Students can sign up to get involved and get to know them since there will be a lot of them tabling at the event. Students can gain knowledge and also participate in these games.

Upcoming Events

In addition to the Spartan Olympics, Gianni is planning several upcoming events, such as Spartan Speakeasy, a collaboration with the Center for Public Speaking on April 4 in the Rathskeller. Dress to Impress is an event in partnership with the volunteering organization Peace and is scheduled for April 10.

Gianni said he enjoys working with different organizations on campus to align with Student Productions' goals of fostering partnerships, maintaining relationships, and bringing entertainment to campus.

Greek Week at UTampa Raises \$211,000 for Make-A-Wish

By Elizabeth Stillwell

The University of Tampa's Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) organizations came together last week to raise an impressive \$211,000 for Make-A-Wish Southern Florida, showcasing the commitment of the UTampa Greek community's dedication to philanthropy and service. The week-long event, held from Feb. 15–22, showcased the power of unity and collaboration, bringing together over 1,600 Greek life members for friendly competition and charitable efforts.

Greek Life Gives Back

Greek Week is an annual tradition at UTampa that encourages fraternities and sororities to engage in fundraising, educational events, and team-based challenges to raise money for local and national charities. The event, which has become a cornerstone of UTampa's Greek life, not only focuses on fun and competition but emphasizes the importance of giving back. This year's efforts were supporting Make-A-Wish, an organization dedicated to granting life-changing wishes for children battling critical illnesses.

Throughout the week, Greek organizations participated in events designed to promote community and charitable spirit. Among the most memorable activities were bubble soccer on the

grand lawn, sidewalk chalk art in the Vaughn Center courtyard, trivia competitions, and the highly anticipated Greek Variety Show, which alone raised over \$15,000 for the cause. These events brought Greek life members together in both spirited competition and a collective mission to support an incredible cause.

Raising Awareness Beyond Fundraising

In addition to fundraising, Greek organizations

"Ultimately, it's also a way for organizations to table and boost their own organizations"

worked together to promote awareness for Make-A-Wish and the importance of giving back. Through social media campaigns, community outreach, and on-campus events, students engaged their peers in the cause and highlighted the importance of service in Greek life.

Brianna Murch, a member of Sigma Kappa and Greek Week captain, looks forward to the week of friendly competition and philanthropy every year.

"It's great because the whole week is about obviously fundraising money for these charities," said Murch. "We obviously have a lot of fun doing it too."

Murch, who has seen the event grow year after year, highlighted how Greek Week strengthens bonds between chapters while contributing to a cause much larger than any individual or organization.

Top Fundraisers

Greek Week participants represent the three governing councils: Interfraternity Council, College Panhellenic Association, and Unified Greek Council. Teams were divided into Disney-themed groups, competing in various challenges to earn points throughout the week. Leading the fundraising efforts was Team Cheetah Girls, Zeta Tau Alpha, and Phi Gamma Delta (FIJI), which raised a total of \$62,274, an impressive portion of the total donations.

"We could not be more grateful to have had the opportunity to do so," Zeta Tau Alpha stated in an Instagram post after winning this year's Greek Week. "Thank you to everyone who donated and helped us raise so much money for an amazing cause."

Other top fundraising teams included:

- **Team Teen Beach Movie:** Raised \$61,217
- **Team High School Music:** Raised \$26,217

Greek Week continues to be a major philanthropic event at UTampa, reinforcing the university's commitment to community engagement, leadership, and service. This year's fundraising success reflects the dedication of the UTampa Greek community to making a positive impact and their ability to unite for the greater good. The funds raised will go directly to Make-A-Wish Southern Florida, helping grant wishes for children in need of hope and joy during difficult times. With more than \$211,000 raised, the success of this year's event further solidifies Greek Week as a celebration of community, generosity, and the spirit of giving.



Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth Stillwell

2025 Florida State Fair Review

Tampa's Annual Fair Brings Rides, Food, and Fun for Its 121st Celebration

By Reanna Fogelman

The Florida State Fair is a big attraction in Tampa every year. Held at the Florida State Fairgrounds, The MIDFLORIDA Credit Union Amphitheater was the main place for this fair from Feb. 6 to 17, 2025, which is generally an auditorium for concerts. The Florida State Fair is the annual Florida Fair, with more than 150 other events.

The 330-acre Fairgrounds are situated permanently next to I-4 and I-75 in the center of Tampa Bay. This fair includes a few areas: Bob Thomas Equestrian Center, Cracker Country, and Florida Learning Garden.

The Florida State Fair offered tickets for exhibits, entertainment, and activities for visitors of all ages, making it a family-friendly destination that varied from a \$15 no-riding admission to an all-package ticket that ranged from \$27 to \$45. The advantage of this all-package ticket was that it allowed you to ride all of the fair's rides. This fair's roller coaster rides included bumper cars, merry-go rides, teacup rides, and water gun games.

Piggy racing, live music, demolition derbies, circus shows, petting zoos, camel and pony rides, and other exclusive activities were also available. Burgers, pizza, corn dogs, fried Oreos, funnel cakes, and more were included in the vendors.

Rides had height and age restrictions. For safety precautions, individuals under the age of 17 had to be accompanied by a 21-year-old adult.

"I never knew about the fair before this and wanted to try something that seemed very popular among Floridians."

The Florida State Fair launched an app on Google and Apple. This app included the schedule for that day, food vendors, attractions, exhibits, shows, etc.

"We're thrilled to offer a more interactive and personalized fair experience for our guests this year," said Cheryl Flood, CEO of the State Fair. "The new app will give visitors an easy way to navigate the



Photo Courtesy of Reanna Fogelman

fairgrounds, discover new attractions, and enjoy all the classic favorites. With so much to see and do, it's all about helping you make the most of every moment at the Florida State Fair."

"I attended the Florida State Fair because I've never been to a fair before in my life, and I've always wanted to experience one, and I also wanted to have fun with my friends," said Jose Abraham, a junior cybersecurity major at The University of Tampa.

"The racing pigs by far, and the ferris wheel were my favorite [attractions]; being able to squeeze our entire group into one capsule of the ferris wheel and then screaming at everyone was a lot of fun, and then cheering the racing pigs was a lot fun too," said Abraham. "The 18-inch corn dog has gotta be my favorite [snack], especially because I've never had [a] corn dog before."

Abraham loved his first time at the fair and recommended that anyone try it out with their friends.

"I went to the fair to experience something with friends," said Jaxon Hook, a junior finance major at UTampa. "I never knew about the fair before this and wanted to try something that seemed very popular among Floridians. Either mousetrap or the fireworks [were my favorite part]. I didn't have the money to go on that many rides at the fair."

"I really liked the buffalo chicken grilled cheese. I also enjoyed the deep-fried cookie dough, but the food there was pretty expensive," said Hook.

Hook said visiting the fair is worth it at least once, but be prepared to spend a pretty penny.

Apple Cider Vinegar

We all tell white lies, but are some white lies more catastrophic than others?

By Isabella May

The show *Apple Cider Vinegar* premiered on Netflix on Feb. 6, 2025, and tells the story of Belle Gibson, played by Kaitlyn Dever. This Australian woman lies about having cancer, along with other medical issues, to gain sympathy and support from others. The show does an astounding job showing that Belle created the lie when she threw her baby shower and invited a few coworkers. Everyone bailed or made up an excuse for not being able to come. Feeling alone, Belle saw the rising success of Alysia Debnam-Carey's Milla Blake. Reading all the love and support she received from other people, she went down the only path that would give her the same feeling: love.

Not to argue that Belle Gibson was right, but in some ways, she is relatable. Have there ever been times we felt so alone, so unseen, we'd do anything we could to make ourselves visible? Have there been times you hung out with a certain group of people or listened to a certain type of music you used to despise just to fit in? Belle was wrong in how she attempted to fit in, but if people had cared more and taken the chance to see who she was, this lie may never have happened. Did Belle Gibson create the lie out of spite, or did the people who ignored her force her into a lie?

"I don't think she did that to hurt people; she was just too far in and mentally unwell," said Lili Soleberg, a biology major at The University of Tampa.

Was Belle the enemy, or was she a victim who made a small lie snowball? Many who have seen the show on Netflix or knew of Belle's story before the show believed she was a ruthless, evil human being. Others believe she was mentally unwell and desired love and affection so much that it overcame her.

"I don't think she is a victim; I think you always have a choice in life"

"She felt unloved and wanted more attention, and it unraveled way too far," said Claire Kulas, a biology major at UTampa.

Some believe that one lie is not worse than another and that all lies, no matter how big or small, are bad; a lie is a lie. Belle Gibson started her lie by saying that she had terrible migraines, which led to her false discovery that she had brain cancer. After years of keeping up this lie, people, such as her publicist,

question whether or not she had cancer. After the fear of people distrusting her and no longer loving her, she made a post saying that she had just discovered that she had blood, spleen, uterine, liver, and kidney cancer. She became so invested in her lies that they overcame her.

"I don't think she is a victim; I think you always have a choice in life, and you reap what you sow," said Ryleigh Donegan, an English major at UTampa. "Lying, in general, is just bad; it's not good. Do I think some lies are more detrimental than others? Yes. I mean, I think you can get invested in a lie like she did."

Dever did an incredible job showing the fear and anxiety surrounding her constantly about people finding out about her lie and no longer loving her. There is one particular scene where she is sitting in the shower practicing what to say in her post to inform her viewers about her newly developed cancers. The scene demonstrates that Belle was not just a liar but an actress, and she knew how to put on a show that people believed online and in person. Belle was a wonderful actress, and we can acknowledge that, but we must shake our heads at the show she put on.



America is Creating a Toxic Environment for Children of Immigrant Families?

By Genesis Aviles

The tragic death of 11-year-old Jocelynn Rojo Carranza underscores the devastating effects of bullying. Jocelynn, from Gainesville, Texas, died by suicide on Feb. 8 after being bullied over her family's immigration status. Her mother, Marbella Carranza, told CNN affiliate KUVN that classmates threatened to report her parents to immigration authorities. Jocelynn was receiving counseling at the school, but Carranza claimed she wasn't informed and was unaware of the bullying. The Gainesville Independent School District has launched an investigation but declined to comment, according to CNN.

What happened to Jocelynn is not just heartbreaking — it's a reflection of the toxic environment we are creating for our children in America. Jocelynn's suicide, reportedly after being bullied at school about her family's immigration status, shines a light on the damage that bullying can cause, not only to a child's mental health but also to their families and communities.

Families should never be left in the dark about their children's struggles, and schools must do more to protect students from harm. Jocelynn's story should not only fuel conversations about the consequences of bullying but also serve as a catalyst for change in how we safeguard our children's emotional well-being.

What happened to Jocelynn should be a warning for parents, educators, and society at large. Children should be raised to be kind, to understand and respect differences, and not to target others over sensitive topics that they do not fully comprehend — especially ones as complex as immigration. The cruelty of making fun of a child because of their family's immigration status is disturbing. Many people who have built a life in the U.S. are terrified of losing everything they've worked for. They're being forced to return to a country where they no longer feel they belong because their new life is here now.

For a child to be bullied with such a heavy topic can have lasting emotional consequences, often leading to feelings of isolation, worthlessness, and in cases like Jocelynn's, even suicide.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know are in crisis, please call, text, or chat with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988, or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741.

Bullying is not just a personal problem; it is a bigger issue that shows what our society values. The harsh and often violent language used about immigration, especially through policies pushed by President Donald Trump, has fueled an environment of hate. This is causing fear and division that is affecting not only adults but also children.

The idea that children might see their parents taken away by authorities or face threats of deportation themselves, is a fear that no child should have to carry. Yet, it is precisely this climate of fear that has led to bullying, where children who have the privilege of not facing these threats feel empowered to attack those who do, which is cruel.

It's painful to think about how many children are growing up in environments where the idea of immigration is turned into something negative or criminal. The truth is that immigration should be a human right. Seeking a better life, fleeing violence or persecution, or trying to provide for one's family should never be seen as a crime.

Parents, educators, and community leaders must play a significant role in correcting this narrative. We have to teach our children that being kind to others, regardless of where they come from, is essential to building a compassionate society. It's crucial to educate children about the humanity behind immigration and to foster empathy for those who are simply trying to find safety, opportunity, or a better future — just as many generations of Americans have done before.



Photo courtesy of Monica Sedra, via Unsplash.

Furthermore, we must hold schools accountable for protecting all students. The fact that Jocelynn's family was unaware of the bullying, despite the school's knowledge and her counseling sessions, shows a dangerous lack of communication and responsibility. No child should ever feel alone in their struggle or be left to cope with trauma in silence.

To gain a deeper insight into how teachers should navigate these situations, I reached out to Tony Erben, interim chair of the Department of Education at The University of Tampa. He said teachers should teach students to embrace diversity in the classroom.

“The biggest thing with humans is humans fear what they don't know,” he said. “The thing is, you don't know what you don't know, and then that tragically expresses itself either in violence or in bullying behaviors.”

Erben said that a teacher should emphasize that differences are valuable and shine a light on them consistently.

“Difference is what makes life interesting, right?” Erben said.

Erben said that even simple messages, like reminding students that diversity is valuable and practicing it daily, can help change attitudes.

Resources are available for students struggling with mental health challenges at The University of Tampa. Students can reach out to the university's mental health support line at (833) 755-0484, which is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Appointments can also be made with Counseling Services at the Dickey Health Center by emailing counselingservices@ut.edu or calling (813) 253-6250.

How To Keep Up With Events and Organizations on Campus

UTampa has so much to offer students. Here are some ways to learn more about the fun events happening on campus.

By Gloria Falach

As a freshman, I was surprised at all The University of Tampa had to offer. I wondered how my peers found out about all the fun clubs and events on campus.

If you also feel like you never know about fun events until you hear about it from someone, here is a how-to guide on finding and participating in things on campus.

UTampa makes it easy for students to see what is going on both on and off campus.

The InvolveUT app shows students everything happening with just a click of a button. It's the app the school always advertises to students and for good reason. All organizations are required to get their events and meetings approved through InvolveUT.

The app allows students to see a list of events and meetings happening each day of the week. It gives students more information on events, displays the contact information of organizers, explains who is allowed to attend, and shows who is already registered to go to the event.

InvolveUT also has a search feature that allows students to find clubs based on their interests.

If checking the app daily isn't your thing, reminders and information of events can be found all over campus.

As a student who lives on campus, I catch myself staring at the many flyers when I wait for the elevator to come down to the first floor. Like in my dorm, flyers are posted in almost every building. Each flyer advertises a different event or club that is open to students.

Plant Hall, in particular, has flyers on all of its

"Here is a how-to guide on finding and participating in things on campus."

floors, advertising career fairs, internship fairs, off-campus housing fairs, multiple job opportunities, clubs, and reminders.

Similarly, the floors of many campus buildings have bulletin boards filled with flyers, offering students ways to get more involved and take advantage of opportunities.

Talking to peers and professors is another way to discover things happening on campus.

Many professors encourage students to attend events, opportunities, and lectures related to the course subject. This allows students to gain experience in their major and meet new people. Sometimes, professors will offer extra credit for attending speaker events as a way to push students.

Mass emails are also commonly sent to students of a certain year or major to inform them about upcoming events for making connections and gaining experience. I make sure to check my email as much as I can so I can stay up-to-date on what is happening on campus.

Looking at the social media accounts of clubs on campus also allows students to learn more. Clubs use Instagram to post updates, promote events, and highlight involved students.

Students will repost a club's Instagram post on their stories — especially students on a club's executive board, as they want to encourage all their friends to join and get involved.

Here are some larger Instagram accounts to get started:

Student Productions: @utamasp

UTampa Career Services: @utampacarer

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): @utampa_inclusion

Whether you're walking on campus or scrolling through social media, it can be easy to find the next campus event to attend or club to join.



Photo courtesy of Gloria Falach

Influencers are Becoming the New Journalists

By Grace Gallowitz

Imagine an age where your newsfeed is curated by people you follow on TikTok and Instagram rather than seasoned journalists in stuffy newsrooms. Forget the evening broadcast: Your updates will come in real-time, unfiltered, from the palm of your hand. This is not science fiction; it is our current reality. The distinction between influencer and journalist has begun to blur, and the concept of “news” is being redefined in front of our eyes. Is this the beginning of a new age of knowledge, or are we descending into a society where truth is as temporary as a viral trend? The power to inform is moving, and the issue is whether we are prepared for the change.

About one in five Americans — including a much higher share of adults under 30 at 37% — say they regularly get news from influencers on social media according to Pew Research Center.

Influencers bring immediacy and authenticity, which is a vital part of this change. Unlike traditional news cycles, which follow set schedules and editing processes, influencers give real-time updates and unedited perspectives. This immediacy appeals to viewers accustomed to quick satisfaction and personalized material.

“It’s something that audiences trust more”

“If you think about the kinds of journalism that mainstream media outlets do, that’s very different than community journalism,” stated an NPR article about how influencers are impacting the media. “That type of information that is closer to communities often is seen as more, ‘authentic.’”

“It’s something that audiences trust more,” the article stated, “And these large media outlets, unfortunately, have kind of lost that connection with their audiences.”

This feeling of trust makes their audience listen to what they have to say. But authenticity by itself doesn’t mean that information is reliable. Even if an influencer really believes what they’re saying, they can still spread false or biased information. The desire for integrity can also be controlled, leading

to carefully curated personas that mimic realness without possessing genuine substance.

Kimberly Choto, communications professor at The University of Tampa, said it’s easy to look credible.

“To get credibility, I’m going to look and sound the part, and I’m going to talk like this, and I’m going to maybe be behind a desk that’s in my living room, and I’m going to have my degrees behind me,” said Choto. “[That] absolutely could work, or you’re trying to get through the clutter and you’re under your desk.”

While influencers give a sympathetic and accessible way to consume news, their lack of accountability is a concern. Traditional journalists follow strong ethical guidelines and fact-checking standards, while influencers face fewer restraints. Without control, misinformation may spread quickly, impacting public opinion without being checked.

Social media algorithms also influence news consumption. These platforms promote satisfying or polarizing material to engage users. This means that an influencer’s content is impacted by their own biases and what gets the most clicks, shares, and interactions. Audiences may become echo chambers where they only hear information that supports their ideas.

“I think there’s value in the type of media like X or Bluesky or Threads because it is typically uncurated, very quick information,” said Choto. “And there’s some peace to that.”

Even with these concerns, some influencers have worked to protect the ethics of journalism. Some work with well-known news outlets and others make sure the information they share is accurate before they share it. But since there aren’t any industry-wide standards or rules in place, it’s mostly up to the audience to figure out which sources they can trust and which ones they shouldn’t.

For example, lifestyle and beauty influencer Alix Earle creates interesting, unvarnished content. She became famous on TikTok with her Get Ready With Me (GRWM) videos, which show her makeup routines, clothes hauls, and social life. Earle has a



Photo courtesy of Jason Howie, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

loyal audience due to her personable, high-energy demeanor. She opens up about her education and personal challenges, making her material seem genuine.

Because she addresses the highs and lows of her life without hiding any flaws, Earle’s honesty gives her a significant impact. She establishes credibility with her audience by being honest while talking about breakups and issues with acne. Because of her openness, her suggestions seem sincere, which enables her to influence trends and establish a close bond with her followers.

Using influencers as news sources is a big sign of a big change in journalism. They are quick, easy to relate to, and they give different points of view, but the fact that they aren’t supervised raises concerns about their truth and responsibility. As long as this trend keeps going, it will be important to find a balance between standard reporting norms and how the media is changing. Consumers must become more media literate, verifying sources and questioning biases, while platforms and policymakers should consider new ways to ensure information integrity in the digital age.

How Two UTampa Professors Are Combating Human Trafficking

By Faith Montalvo

Her father was her trafficker. She attended high school and The University of Tampa for a while, but no one knew about her situation. She didn't realize it herself. Her life and her family seemed normal on the outside.

This survivor did not know that she could go somewhere to seek help or tell anyone, said Charrita Ernewein, nursing professor at UTampa. It had been ingrained in her mind that she was worthless, could not make a decision, take a stand, or do anything different. It started as childhood sexual abuse and eventually led to trafficking.

Ernewein said she frequently presents with this survivor. She integrates real stories like this into her trainings and presentations to show people that human trafficking is real and how healthcare providers may have failed to recognize its signs in patients.

Florida ranks third in the U.S. for human

trafficking, which is often referred to as modern slavery. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines human trafficking as “the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or

“Florida ranks third in the U.S. for human trafficking, which is often referred to as modern slavery.”

commercial sex act.” With human trafficking being such a complex issue, there are countless ways to tackle it.

As the chairperson of the board of directors, an anti-human trafficking organization at Shared Hope International, Ernewein educates the community and trains healthcare providers, reaching between 500 and 1,500 people annually through her trainings and presentations.

According to Ernewein, many victims do not know they are being trafficked. She said many are trafficked by loved ones who are supposed to take care of them, and their lives look relatively normal to outsiders.

“They started out as these children that had this happen to them,” Ernewein said. “Some survivors don't remember anything different; this is all they've ever known.”

They would either not identify as being trafficked, or they would not feel safe speaking up.

Ernewein began her doctorate not knowing that she would interview 30 human trafficking survivors. As she researched different topics to write during her program, she found that there was little academic literature on the issue. She published her dissertation and thesis in *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*

Charrita Ernewein educates healthcare providers with Shared Hope International, and Nicole Dolack coordinates Selah Freedom's outreach program and a court diversion program.

Photo courtesy of Shared Hope International (left) and Nicole Dolack (right).

in 2015, arguing that nurse practitioners may be the only professionals to interact with trafficking victims.

As she interviewed survivors for her Ph.D., she found that healthcare providers were unaware of human trafficking and did not know how to recognize it. She eventually traveled across the U.S. and abroad to provide trainings and presentations to healthcare providers, teaching them how to recognize signs of human trafficking in patients.

Charrita Ernewein stands in front of her presentation for the 2024 American Association of Nurse Practitioner (AANP) Conference, where she presented to hundreds of providers. Photo courtesy of Charrita Ernewein.

“I think it comes from having grown in a needy community,” said Ernewein, referring to her upbringing in the inner cities of Chicago. “Knowing that there was never the right person to educate people appropriately.”



“It’s helped me to be the strong person that I am, and then my strong mom helped give me the strength to be able to do what I do,” Ernewein said.

At Selah Freedom, an anti-sex trafficking organization in Sarasota, UTampa criminology professor Nicole Dolack is the full-time outreach coordinator. Selah Freedom’s outreach program is the first point of contact for a survivor, where they respond to referrals and assess what resources victims need.

She is also the coordinator for the Turn Your Life Around (TYLA) diversion court program, which provides rehabilitation for people arrested for prostitution-related crimes. Survivors who participate in the program’s trauma therapy and drug and alcohol treatment can have their charges dropped. Dolack said that while diversion programs typically have a 30% graduation rate, TYLA’s is around 50%.

Dolack said survivors can learn how to live a stable life and make their own choices through Selah Freedom and the TYLA program, opportunities they never had before. She said she’s seen victims getting reunified with their children, hitting milestones in sobriety, and even discovering a hobby they enjoy.

“[Recovery is] still ongoing, but it’s not sitting as heavy and as present as when I first screen them in jail, or in the hospital, or when they’re on the streets,” Dolack said.

Dolack said she’s always been a free spirit who’s wanted to work with women. Although she couldn’t point to a specific moment that led her from Connecticut to Florida, she recalled stopping a man from taking her friend into a bathroom at a house party in high school. There was also the time a few years ago when a former college roommate said her job in human trafficking outreach must have been her dream job. She doesn’t remember talking about human trafficking then, but she knows she wanted to empower women and stand up for them.

“To hear that people’s freedoms were being taken away from them, I just couldn’t comprehend it,” she said.

Selah Freedom has a five-pillar program addressing human trafficking. The organization has served over 7,000 survivors and trained about 85,000 youth and adults on the issue.

Laurie Swink, co-founder of Selah Freedom and director over its consulting program, said they still encounter people who do not know what human trafficking is and that it’s happening in Florida.



Charrita Ernewein stands in front of her presentation for the 2024 American Association of Nurse Practitioner (AANP) Conference, where she presented to hundreds of providers.

Photo courtesy of Charrita Ernewein.

“Until we all recognize it for what it is and we all become part of the solution, it truly cannot be wiped out,” Swink said.

“To hear that people’s freedoms were being taken away from them, I just couldn’t comprehend it”

The first phase of Selah Freedom’s residential program is characterized by a time of rest and stabilization, providing survivors the opportunity to reflect on how they want to continue life. The second phase teaches them life skills and reintegrates them into society. Selah Freedom boasts that 87% of survivors who graduate their residential program do not return to human trafficking.

“So many times we can take things for granted,” Swink said. “Some of these women have never sat down at a table and had a family meal together.”

Swink said that sex trafficking leaves victims with years of trauma and often leads to other issues like substance abuse, self-harming tendencies, and eating disorders. Survivors could have anywhere from 15 to 20 felonies because of the crimes they’ve been forced to commit, which prevent them from getting a job and housing.

More information about Selah Freedom and Shared Hope International can be found on their websites.

You can reach Selah Freedom’s Survivor Helpline at 1-888-8-FREE-ME.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline is available 24/7. Call at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733. In an emergency, call 911.

If you have information about a missing child or suspected child sexual exploitation, call the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children** at **1-800-843-5678** to report it or visit their website at **cybertipline.com**.

Breaking Into Tampa's Advertising Scene

Anne Myers on Career Growth, Internships, and Finding Success

By Luiza Caraccio Beltrame

For students eager to launch into the dynamic career of advertising and public relations, it can often seem like all roads lead to New York. Anne Myers, director of brand strategy at a local advertising agency named ChappellRoberts, is proof that international success in advertising can be built right here in Tampa Bay's sunny corporate and creative hub. With her extensive career experience and insight, Myers shares advice for students trying to break into the growing advertising scene of Tampa and exemplifies how some roads can lead to Tampa.

Ann Myers, Director of Brand Strategy at ChappellRoberts
 Photo courtesy of Ann Myers



"Being the one speaking up, raising your hands, that's how you form those connections with people"

One of the most alluring aspects of advertising is the ability to integrate creativity and business, said Myers. Naturally, this is what drew her to the early decision to work within this multifaceted area and to pursue her bachelor's degree in advertising at the University of Florida.

After college, she spent five years in the telecommunications marketing industry before deciding to earn an MBA at The University of Tampa. She spent two hard-earned years studying while working a full-time job.

For any graduates considering this experience, Myers advises that while it is hard, it is also doable and ultimately worth it, as evidenced by her current leadership position as director of brand strategy at one of Tampa's most prestigious and successful advertising firms.

After earning her MBA, Myers — like many advertising students — thought her only shot at success was moving to a big city like New York or Chicago.

However, realizing the local potential in Tampa was essential in shaping her professional path.

In this digital age, there is a misconception that local agencies in Tampa only work with local brands. Myers shared that ChappellRoberts collaborates with national and international brands across the globe, including clients in Asia, Switzerland, New York, and London.

Myers also advises students to recognize the benefits of Tampa's tight-knit community and the value of reputation.

"It does give us the opportunity to work with brands that are in our local community too, which I think drives passion for a lot of people," said Myers.

She mentions how excited the team at ChappellRoberts is to work with the Tampa Bay Rays, for example, and how this passion directly translates into their work.

This plays into one of Myers' primary pieces of advice for students and recent graduates looking to break into the advertising world. It is simple but crucial: genuinely care.

Myers believes passion is what sets exceptional employees apart. She encourages students to reflect on what truly excites them because when you love what you do, success comes naturally. Advertising is about making the public see what the people behind a brand see, and it's an agency's responsibility to bring that vision to life. If employees genuinely care, half the battle is already won.

When it comes to advice for current UTampa students, Myers emphasizes the value of building strong professional relationships with professors and peers. She credits much of her own growth to forming these connections and taking advantage of UTampa's small class sizes and experienced faculty. So students — don't be afraid to raise your hand and yap away.

"Being the one speaking up, raising your hands,



Photo Courtesy of Luiza Caraccio Beltrame.

that's how you become known, and that's how you form those connections with people," said Myers.

For many students, the topic of internships can be daunting, and a common perception is that only past internships provide valuable resume experience. Myers disagrees, emphasizing that professional experience doesn't necessarily require a "huge lineup of internships."

According to Myers, the key that quality agencies look for in prospective interns is "showing that you have been in situations where you have worked with a team, where you have used your leadership skills and strategic thinking. You can get creative in a number of ways — volunteer experience, groups, or group projects that you do in your classes."

UTampa has a multitude of clubs, organizations, and awards where students can showcase their people skills, along with many volunteering opportunities, such as working with local shelters like the Humane Society of Tampa Bay or the Mercy Full Project.

Myers notes that personal branding is also a great way to stand out in the internship application process, both in online presence and interviews. Investing in personal analysis — either independently or with the help of friends and family — is a great way to identify and promote personal value.

"I say always overdress rather than underdress, but it's important to let your personality shine through, too!" said Myers, remarking on the necessity of presenting oneself.

Personal branding, along with a strong cover letter, provides a valuable opportunity to showcase who you are beyond educational and professional achievements.

No two days look the same when working in

advertising, and that's exactly what Myers loves about it.

"A typical day doesn't really exist," said Myers.

At ChappellRoberts, she splits her time between remote and in-office work, balancing emails, research, focus groups, and client meetings. Some days, she's reviewing marketing plans over video calls; other days, she's on-site for photo shoots or traveling for a campaign.

"No boring days — that's the truth," she said.

Whether strategizing at her desk or driving to a client site, she leans into the variety and fast-paced nature of agency life, adding that this is what makes agency work a great fit for students who embrace the strategic "no-routine routine."

"No boring days — that's the truth"

With so much happening at once, Myers highlights the importance of organization in an advertising work environment. Whether through Post-it notes, digital planners, or a physical journal, she recommends prioritizing tasks each day to stay on track.

"Sit down and say, 'Okay, well, today, this is the most important thing, then this, and then this,'" she said.

A clear plan helps manage shifting priorities and ensures everything gets done in the best way possible, so employees can also have the time to enjoy the upbeat atmosphere and dynamism of an agency like ChappellRoberts.

For students looking to enter the expanding advertising world of Tampa Bay, Myers has one

major piece of advice: Don't let the unknown hold you back.

"In the beginning of a career, there's a lot more you don't know than what you do," said Myers. "But don't let that scare you. Approach it with curiosity — how can I find out more? How can I learn more?"

She believes a growth mindset sets the best candidates apart, pushing them to learn, adapt, and move forward rather than shrinking back. For students who love the mix of creativity, strategy, and fast-paced work, Tampa Bay is full of opportunity.

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