

THE MINARET

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On Saturday, Feb 28, Students and organizations gather with Sparty at UTampa's first-ever Spartan Rally. Photo courtesy of Genesis Mucke.



BLOSSOM

Spring Has Sprung, and So Have Our Stories

UTampa's First-Ever School Spirit Celebration: Spartans Rally

By Jaide Edwards

Just hours before the UTampa women's basketball game on Saturday, Feb. 28, the University of Tampa hosted its first-ever Spartan Rally, which turned the campus into a center of enthusiasm, unity, and school pride.

The goal of the event, which was organized by UTampa's Student Government (UTSGA) in collaboration with organizations and campus departments, was to strengthen school spirit and unite students in one central location. It was definitely a success.

Students encountered a block of tents that separated a temporarily closed street as they approached the traffic light between the Martinez Center and the Ferman Center

for the Arts. Organizations enthusiastically encouraged onlookers to learn more about their goals and forthcoming activities while music played and talks were given.

Entering the street closure was like entering a small festival. Students congregated in groups, giggling, making connections, and crafting memorable and spontaneous moments. Food, beverages, and sweets were available in the rally's street shutdown, inviting the community to remain and engage through the street.

Student Productions, UTampa Run Club, Alpha Chi Omega, and Delta Phi Epsilon were among the student organizations and campus partners represented. An inflatable activity and interactive features like face painting added to the festive atmosphere, while Sparty the mascot contributed even

more excitement and school pride.

The rally fulfilled its promises for students like Malachi Martis, a first-year business management major.

"I'm loving the event," Martis said. "Great drinks, great snacks provided. It's a good vibe."

Martis said he intended to use that enthusiasm to cheer on the Spartans from the stands for the women's basketball game later that afternoon.

Additionally, student leaders saw the rally as a chance to improve ties between various campus organizations. According to Meredith Chesley, president of Sigma Kappa and a junior nursing student, having a leadership position enables her to develop while inspiring others.

"I just love my sisters and our sisterhood,"

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Former Prince Andrew Arrested in England.

By Olivia Gehm

On Feb. 19, Former Prince Andrew was arrested by British police on suspicion of misconduct in public office after documentation confirmed his ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. According to the Associated Press, he was released 11 hours later, but is under investigation.

The release of Epstein's email files by the U.S. Department of Justice in late January prompted British authorities to investigate Mountbatten-Windsor. He was revealed to have been in contact with Epstein in 2011, at which time he served as Britain's trade envoy, despite the former prince's statement that he had cut ties with Epstein a year prior.

According to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Mountbatten-Windsor was first publicly accused of having links to Epstein's child sex trafficking ring in 2015 by Virginia Giuffre, who alleged that she was trafficked to the former

royal and forced to have sexual relations with him numerous times.

Mountbatten-Windsor has received backlash and punishment from the Royal Family for his ties to Epstein since 2001, when the New York Post published a front-page photo of the former prince walking side-by-side with Epstein.

There may be numerous roadblocks for the prosecution. According to Dr. Timothy Kaye, Professor of Law at Stetson Law School, there are differences between the U.S. and U.K. legal systems that make this case tricky.

Kaye said that the major difference lies in how workers are designated in the U.K. In the U.S., someone is either an employee or a private contractor, whereas the U.K. has a third designation titled "office holder." This designation would allow Andrew to be convicted of misconduct in public office.

However, Kaye said that there is debate as to whether the former prince was actually an office holder, since he was not paid for the work he did as a trade envoy. Challenging this designation could affect the legitimacy of potential charges against Mountbatten-Windsor.

"That's a factual problem," Kaye said. "You can't be guilty of misconduct in public office if you weren't actually in a public office."

Furthermore, Kaye said that the origins of the offense make it difficult to prosecute, since misconduct in public office exists only in common law, not as a statute. While he said many criminal offenses in the U.K. have been standardized into legislation, misconduct in public office has not.

"They're all written in statute, but this one never has been," Kaye said. "And the problem with that is, since it's not a very commonly prosecuted offense, no one is entirely sure what is required in order for a successful prosecution."

If Andrew's designation as a public officer stands and the evidence is compelling, Kaye said that politics are unlikely to interfere with the former prince's prosecution.

"The prosecutors are there to do a job, and they carry on doing it. It's not seen as a political issue," Kaye said. "So the political imperatives just don't make any difference."

The investigation into Andrew is ongoing, and currently at least nine different U.K. police forces are known to be looking into the validity of reports linking Mountbatten-Windsor to Jeffrey Epstein.



Photo courtesy of Ferdinand Stöhr via Unsplash

Civil Rights Leader Rev. Jesse Jackson Dies at 84

By Nicole Droeger Stephens

On Feb. 17, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition announced the death of their founder and civil rights leader, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. A statement from his family shares that he died peacefully, surrounded by people he loved. He is survived by his wife, Jacqueline, and six children.

Rev. Jackson was born on Oct. 8, 1941, in Greenville, SC. He began studying in 1964 at Chicago Theological Seminary but left to join the Civil Rights Movement. He was ordained in 1968 by Rev. Clay Evans of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, and he received his Master of Divinity in 2000.

His involvement in the Civil Rights Movement encouraged Rev. Jackson to create the People United to Serve Humanity (PUSH) organization in 1971 and the Rainbow Coalition in 1984. In 1998, he merged the two organizations. He championed Black voter rights during his presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988.

His family did not announce a cause of death. Rev. Jackson was hospitalized in Nov. 2025 due to complications with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), a rare neurological condition that he was diagnosed with in April of the same year.

Civil Rights Activist

According to a report from the New York Times, in 1963, Rev. Jackson led his first march in downtown Greensboro, NC, landing himself in jail for a day. In 1965, he led some students and faculty from Chicago Theological Seminary to Selma, Ala., and offered services to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), founded by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Six months later, Rev. Jackson joined SCLC at 24.

Controversy arose a day after Dr. King's assassination in 1968. Rev. Jackson appeared on the Today show wearing a turtle-neck covered with Dr. King's blood. Rev. Jackson claimed to have held Dr. King's head while he died, an account former advisors Ralph David Abernathy and Hosea Williams disputed, claiming Rev. Jackson was trying to take the spotlight.

Abernathy suspended Rev. Jackson from the SCLC in 1971 due to misconduct. Undeterred, Rev. Jackson continued with his social justice advocacy, traveling within the United States and to other countries to promote civil rights causes through his PUSH organization.

Presidential Candidate

According to a report from the Associated Press, Rev. Jackson ran for president twice

President Trump Gives The State of the Union, Tries to Gain Traction With Key Issues

By Hayden Randolph

On Feb. 24, President Donald J. Trump gave the State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. The speech covered key issues, including immigration and the economy, and was recorded as the longest address of its kind in U.S. history.

Mentions of immigration issues spanned the entirety of the address. The president claimed that zero undocumented immigrants had entered the country under his administration. Trump also made claims about immigration relating to the Biden administration.

"Under Biden and his corrupt partners in Congress and beyond, it reached a breaking point with the green new scam, open borders for everyone," Trump said. "They poured in by the millions and millions from prisons, from mental institutions. There were murderers, 11,088 murderers."

According to The New York Times, the president seems to be misquoting federal data with these claims. Trump could be referencing data on noncitizens over multiple past administrations.

Trump praised his own tariffs for taking a burden off Americans.

"I believe the tariffs, paid for by foreign countries, will, like in the past, substantially replace the modern-day system of income tax, taking a great financial burden off the people that I love."

However, these tariffs are largely paid for by the American people and not by foreign governments, according to The New York Times. The president called the decision to strike down these tariffs by the Supreme Court "totally wrong."

Trump said the Republicans would protect resources for seniors.

"We're also working to make it easier for Americans to save for retirement. And under this administration, we will always protect Social Security and Medicare," Trump said. "They are not protecting it for our seniors."

According to Fortune, since taking office in 2025, legislation pushed by the administration has lessened the financial lifespan for both Medicare and Social Security.

Trump honored the U.S. Olympic Men's Hockey Team for their win at the Winter

as a Democrat. In his 1988 campaign, he successfully received 13 primaries and caucuses for the Democratic nomination, a record for Black politicians in the U.S. at that time.

Coalition Leader

In 1996, Rev. Jackson founded the Rainbow PUSH Coalition (RPC) in Chicago, Ill. The organization promotes its mission to "protect, defend, and gain civil rights by leveling the economic and educational playing fields, and to promote peace and justice around the world." RPC offers PUSH Excel, a tax-exempt organization and education program that advocates "equal funding for all students without regard to race or economic standing."

The RPC claims to have offered 1,500 scholarships, paid \$6.1 million in scholarship money, facilitated 500 new jobs, and saved over 4,000 homes from foreclosure. Currently, over 50,000 members are enrolled with the RPC.

Visits to Florida

The Tampa Bay Times lists a collection of times Rev. Jackson visited the state. Notable events include the 1987 Florida Democratic convention in Miami Beach, where former Gov. of Arkansas, Bill Clinton, was in attendance, and his media appearance with former Gov. of Florida, Jeb Bush, in 2005 to comment on the Terri Schiavo life support case.

In 2007, WMNF reported Rev. Jackson's visit to the University of South Florida. During the college's week-long celebration

of Dr. King, Rev. Jackson presented a lecture that discussed the history of legal degradation, education access, and voting rights of Africans in the U.S.

WFLA reports that Rev. Jackson visited Tampa's 34th Street Church of God in 2011 and discussed voting rights with the congregation.

Celebration of Life Services

Although Rev. Jackson has passed away, his legacy will be remembered. Rev. Jackson's family and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition are hosting multiple celebration of life services across Chicago, IL; Washington, D.C.; Virginia; and South Carolina. Services will begin Feb. 26 and end Mar. 7. Updates and registration information can be found at JesseJacksonLegacy.com.



Jesse Jackson speaking with reporters during the Poor People's Campaign in 2018. Photo courtesy of Lesann Cafferata, CC BY 2.0, via Flickr.

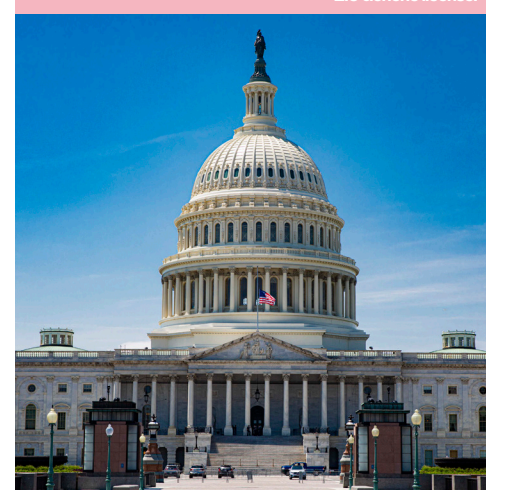
peer ever further into the abyss."

A statement from the University of South Florida College Republicans said the address was "strong and forward-looking."

"These priorities resonate deeply with students across our campus who are concerned about inflation, job opportunities after graduation, and America's standing in the world. As College Republicans, we remain committed to advancing these principles at USF, so everyone can participate in the American Dream."

Conflicting opinions on the State of the Union direct focus onto the midterm elections taking place on Nov. 3, 2026.

A photo of the United States Capitol Building. Photo Courtesy of Senate Democrats under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.



Who is Wuthering Heights for?

By Andrew Miller

With Friday the 13th and the day before Valentine's Day, there could not be a better release date for yet another film adaptation of the classic novel, *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë. The latest version of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* arrived with dramatic timing.

The film has sparked controversy among audiences, with film buffs and book nerds taking very separate stances.

Former film student Alannah Ahlquist said it was more than an adaptation; it attempted to capture the feelings young readers experienced when first reading the novel.

"I adored it," Ahlquist said. "Fennell beautifully captured what my 15-year-old self imagined when I read those pages in my English class."

Wuthering Heights is directed by Emerald Fennell. Her most recent project before that was *Saltburn*. The 2023 film phenomenon left audiences stunned with its unique cinematography and intense, mind-boggling

plot, so whatever Fennell chose to do next guaranteed attention.

For many, the adaptation felt completely out of left field. How could a literary classic work with Emerald Fennell's strange style, a score by Charli xcx, and co-stars Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi? This was not the *Wuthering Heights* audiences were expecting.

Before the film even premiered, former English major Madison Engler shed some light on the initial issues with the film.

Like many others online, Engler discusses a major issue with the 2026 adaptation: Heathcliff is a Middle Eastern man who falls in love with young Catherine, a wealthy white girl. Although Heathcliff ends up being welcomed into the family and makes a life for himself, they ultimately cannot be together due to the time and circumstances they are in.

By casting Jacob Elordi, a white man, as Heathcliff, there was a crucial meaning lost.

"It's not at all what the book was like, and that really bothered me," Engler said. "As a fan of the book, this just wasn't for me."

Despite these concerns with Fennell's puzzling casting choice in selecting Elordi, there's still an undeniable charm in crafting an adaptation that captures how the story felt when you first encountered it at 13.

A "skin room" is referenced several times in Brontë's novel. In the period when the story is set, the term describes a bed tucked into a closet-like alcove, a cramped, enclosed sleeping space. But at 13, Fennell misread the phrase as something far more literal: a room made of skin.

Leaning into that adolescent misunderstanding, she reimagined the space for the screen by photocopying Margot Robbie's skin and printing it onto wallpaper, transforming Cathy's so-called skin room into an unsettlingly literal interpretation.

University of Tampa film student and experimental filmmaker Ollie Walter offers a perspective that pushes back on critics who insist that strict accuracy should take precedence over creative interpretation.

"How many times can the book be adapted to a proper or accurate depiction?" Walter

said. "It's the audience's own fault, assuming older depictions get stale and aren't worth revisiting."

Walter makes a compelling point. Today, it's common to think of any film in the 20th century as older and outdated. In reality, those older tellings of *Wuthering Heights* might be what audiences are looking for, while 2026's adaptation is more so for those who are looking to capture an indescribable feeling. Earlier adaptations may appeal to viewers seeking accuracy, while the 2026 version resonates with those chasing a specific emotional tone.

Ahlquist puts it best: "To any haters, if you weren't a yearning 15-year-old girl when you first read *Wuthering Heights*, just say that."

Photo courtesy of Rawpixel, CC.0 1.0, via Public Domain.



How Women Are Changing the Biggest Stages in Entertainment

By Jaide Edwards

Red carpets and speeches abound throughout awards season, but beyond the beauty is a deeper evolution: women are addressing past injustices in music and film, and altering entertainment's biggest events. The story of the business is changing — from the Academy Awards to the Grammy Awards to the BET Awards — and highlighting events like the Glitz & Girlpower Awards.

However, the data indicate that these triumphs have not come easily.

In the Oscars' inclusion list, it's revealed that, historically, only 17.6% of Academy Award nominees since 1929 were women. Merle Oberon was the first woman of color nominated in 1936. According to the Oscars, "There were a total of 1,369 individual women nominees over the last 97 years, compared to 5,045 individual men." Therefore, women were more likely to get a single nomination than men. The fact that women have only received a few nominations and three wins in the elite Best Director category since the Oscars' inception serves as a sobering reminder that the most influential creative roles in film have historically been filled by men. Out of the three women who have won the award, one of them was Chloe Zhao, a woman of color.

For Best Documentary Feature, 28% of women received nominations. No women were nominated for that category for 28 years. According to Oscars, "The first woman was nominated in 1949 (Janice Loeb, *The Quiet One*) with the first win in 1956 (Nancy Hamilton, *The Unconquered*)." Women secured 30 Oscars to men's 110, meaning only 21% of those award winners were women. In 1982, Tété Vasconcellos became the first woman of color to be nominated, and in 1995, Frida Lee Mock became the first woman of color to win. The Oscar for Best Documentary Feature has been won by four women of color: Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (2019), Audrey Marrs (2011), Zana Briski (2005), and Frida Lee Mock (1995).

In music, the story is just as fascinating. While headlines may highlight prominent female winners at recent Grammy Awards, the statistics show otherwise. Women made up only 20% of the nominations and awards across all categories between 2017 and 2024. According to Mixmag, specifically the Grammys, women made up 28% of nominees, while men accounted for roughly 69% of nomination slots.

Even though women's wins increased from 12% in 2017 to 32% in 2024, the fact remains that men dominated last year's Grammys, with every three out of four nominees and more than two out of three winners being men. With the terms "dominate" and "rule" appearing in about 25% of female and

Grammy-related headlines in 2024, the media perpetuates a "who run the world? Girls" mentality that inaccurately suggests women are winning the awards.

According to Mixmag, Luba Kassova said, "Going forward, I would love reporting on this issue to fully align with reality," in response to the findings.

She wants it to disclose in its news releases the representation of women's nominations and wins within all categories for gender research.

The full report from AKAS is here.

These figures frame triumphant moments rather than erasing them. Women's high-profile Grammy and Oscar victories are significant because they take place in a system that frequently favors male nominations and winners.

These figures especially hold significance for the University of Tampa film students who are ready to enter the field.

Echo Prescott, a junior film and media arts major, expressed that one woman who influenced the way she tells stories and directs is Natasha Lyonne, an American actress, director, producer, writer, and comedian known for her raspy voice and offbeat charisma.

"In an interview, she talks a lot about the fact that women should be directing more, and that they don't really need to downsize themselves to directing 'girly' films. Like a woman could obviously direct *Rambo*," said Prescott. Seeing women go beyond stereotypes reveals to her that anyone can tell compelling stories, and that talent, not appearance, is the key to success.

For Prescott, Women's History Month is an opportunity. She sees it as having a spotlight to shine. She's currently preparing to make a film through UTampa.

"It's like my time to shine, especially when people kind of like to have an eye on women to see what they're doing," said Prescott.

Women directors and creators continue to claim historic victories and visibility, despite persistent inequalities. Award-winning films by Ava DuVernay have highlighted marginalized voices, and women like Shonda Rhimes have established significant careers that defy Hollywood's institutional constraints.

Similar intricacy may be seen in the Grammy Awards, a celebration that is closely linked to pop culture and youth. The overall prize landscape reveals a story of underrepresentation, even though breakthrough victories by female artists in flagship categories can generate significant news cycles. Despite the fact that female musicians are taking center stage and pushing the boundaries of their genres, less than one in five Grammy candidates and winners over the last eight years were female in previous award seasons.

Award shows also serve as case studies in visibility, power, and perception for communication students at UTampa.

Gianna Spadafora, a junior communication and media studies major, gave her perspective on how she feels women in entertainment manage their public image.

"They could definitely be a lot more about it, a lot more authentic and relatable. I feel like there are a lot of women in the industry.

continue reading on page 5.

Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics Have Come to an End, but the Debate is Just Beginning

By Wandale Marie

At the 2026 Winter Olympics, Team USA made history, winning 12 gold medals, which is the most the nation has ever won in one Winter Games.

Like most things in the United States, sports are not excluded from political scrutiny, and it is almost expected in this kind of arena. Team USA made headlines with controversial comments made by the men's freestyle skiers during a press conference where multiple athletes expressed their complex feelings on representing the United States.

Most recently, Team USA men's ice hockey gold medal celebration took a turn when receiving a call from President Donald Trump. While these athletes made history side by side, the conversations surrounding them reveal how divided we have become. We should be united in celebrating their achievements, regardless of politics or gender.

Out of the three men's freestyle skiers who shared their feelings on representing the United States, Hunter Hess took the most heat for his comment, saying, "It brings up a

lot of mixed emotions to represent the U.S. right now... just cause I'm wearing the flag doesn't mean I represent everything going on in the U.S." Many speculated the comments were in reference to recent ICE protests and raids, though Hess did not explicitly name a specific issue.

President Trump responded directly to Hess's comment through a post on Truth Social: "Hunter Hess, a real Loser, says he doesn't represent his Country in the current Winter Olympics. If that's the case, he shouldn't have tried out for the Team, and it's too bad he's on it."

After these comments began to circulate, many considered Hess to be disloyal and a bad representation of the United States, but I believe that these comments are inherently patriotic. *Newsweek* and *The Guardian* report on public figures who criticized Hess and other Team USA athletes who spoke out about their political views at the 2026 Winter Olympics. Team USA athletes have the same right to share their disagreement with actions being taken in the United States as any other citizen.

Disrespecting opposing beliefs and the idea that disagreement equals disloyalty is inherently un-American. The foundation of democracy and our nation is voicing differing opinions and coming to a compromise. Through the intense political divide currently happening in the United States, many have lost sight of this fact.

Locker room celebrations are inherently fun, but any tiny comment can take it too far. In a video that went viral earlier this week, the Team USA men's ice hockey team is seen talking to President Trump via phone call during their post-win celebration. President Trump invited the men's ice hockey team to

his State of the Union address to celebrate their victory against Canada.

Almost immediately after the invitation, President Trump made a dismissive comment about also having to invite the USA women's ice hockey team. The men's team proceeded to laugh at these comments, which incited outrage when the video documenting this conversation went viral.

The problem with the phone call isn't the invitation to honor these athletes; it's the dismissive nature toward the amazing success of the women's ice hockey team and celebrating this amazing victory as a country.

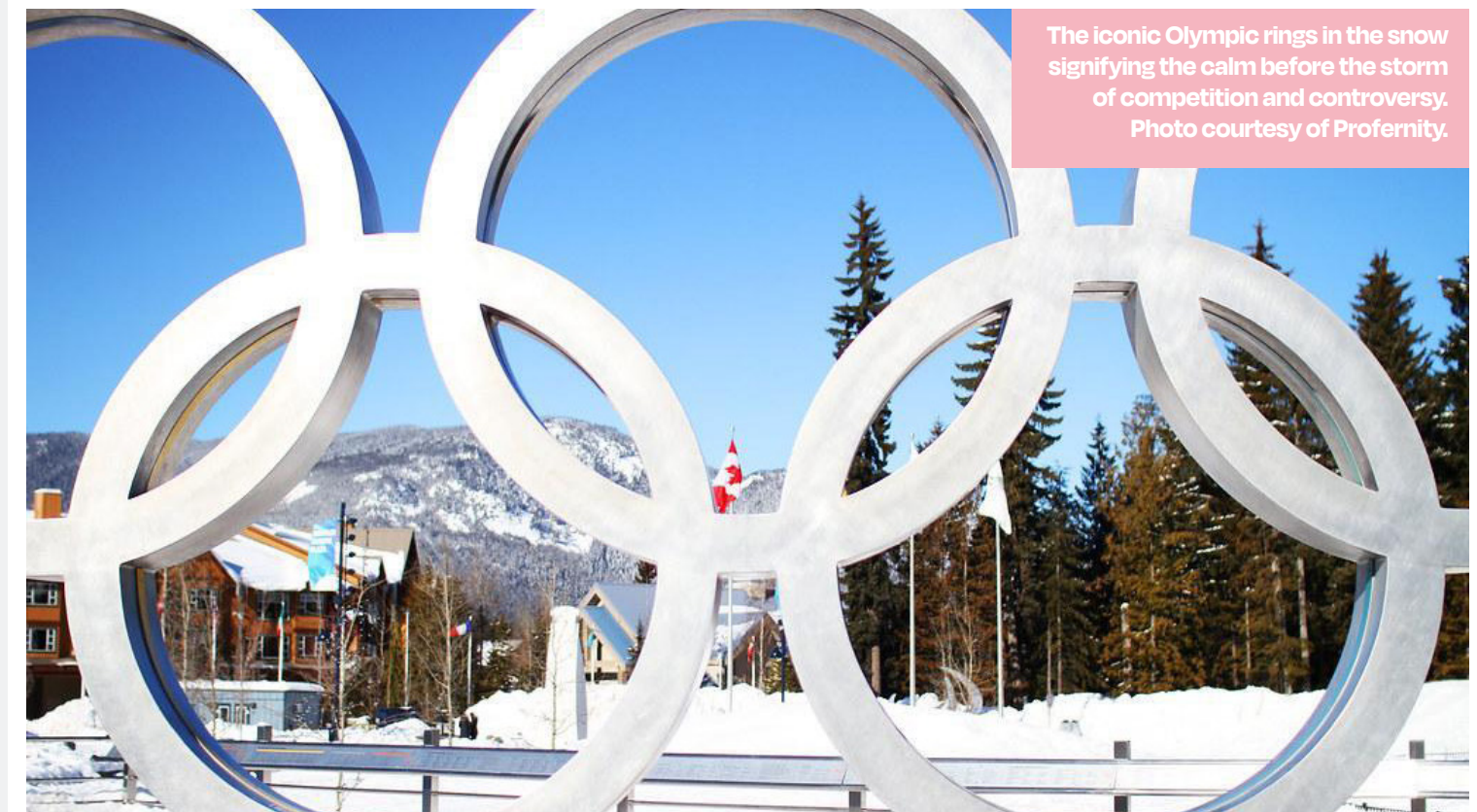
"Distasteful joke," said Hilary Knight, captain of the USA women's ice hockey team, in response to the video during a press conference with the PWHL Seattle Torrent. "[This is] overshadowing a lot of the success of women at the Olympics carrying for Team USA."

Since coming home, some of the players on the men's ice hockey team have shown remorse for their actions. "We should have reacted differently," said Jeremy Swayman, goalie on the Team USA ice hockey team, in response to the video, reported on by CBS Boston. "We're so excited for the women's team and have so much respect for the women's team."

The success of all the women on Team USA should not be an afterthought. We must challenge ourselves to celebrate success equally and open our minds to different perspectives. Team USA started a whole new chapter in the history book with their incredible performance at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, and celebrating this incredible victory as they return home should be the main focus.



Women's History Month in the entertainment industry. Photo courtesy of Mirko Fabian from Pexels.



The iconic Olympic rings in the snow signifying the calm before the storm of competition and controversy. Photo courtesy of Profernity.

Why UTampa Football Should Return and a Vision for It

By Ben Rosen

The University of Tampa (UTampa) needs to revive its once-prominent football program. From 1933 to 1974, UTampa had a football team that accumulated a 201-160-12 record. However, the program was shut down in February of 1975 because of its cost concerns. There have been no serious efforts to revive the program since. That should change.

But in 2026, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and college athletics as a whole are in a different place. Over the last two years, UTampa has seen leadership transitions in the president and athletic director roles as well. There is an opening for a school like UTampa to succeed in football in modern college athletics.

President Teresa Abi-Nader Dahlberg has made efforts to improve school spirit on the UTampa campus. However, school spirit seems to remain low. Bringing back the football program will help improve school spirit and boost other sports in the process. Athletic Director E.J. Brophy is in his first year on the job as well.

With Division I Football Championship Series (FCS) schools, including one of the most dominant FCS programs, North Dakota State University, as well as Sacramento State University moving up to Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), there are openings for a school like UTampa in FCS or Division II.

It is not unreasonable to think that South Dakota State University and the University of Montana, among others, could follow North Dakota State to the FBS level. FCS conferences may try to recruit current Division II teams to backfill as well. This could create a scenario where multiple conferences try to get a hypothetical return of the UTampa football team.

In Division II, the Gulf South Conference only has four teams, with one located in Mississippi, one located in Alabama, one located in Georgia, and one located in Florida. The Gulf South Conference is easily the smallest Division II football conference. This conference would be a good starting point for a returning UTampa football team.

It will take time and resources, specifically money, to bring UTampa football back. Still, it is not an impossible task, and the demand for the football program's return is there. When UTampa football is mentioned on the official social media channels, the comments are usually flooded with posts calling for the program's return. It needs to happen.

Being a football school will help UTampa attract more students and allow for cross-promotion with other athletics teams that can help boost their attendance. This will

help school spirit and create a more unified campus culture. Core values of this, such as discipline, leadership, respect, and determination, are applicable on the football field and in the classroom.

On the football side of things, a potential UTampa football head coach should be someone who has a clear vision for the program, is a CEO type of head coach with strong leadership skills, and can build a roster effectively in the modern era of college athletics. Someone who can maximize the resources they are provided with to build a competitive roster.

This head coach should be someone who puts an emphasis on building the offensive and defensive lines while also investing in special teams. A coach who has run units that nail the fundamentals while being tough and disciplined, not committing penalties. Someone who can build a staff of assistant coaches who are all on the same page and unified.

Prior head coaching experience at the high school or college level would be useful, considering that this coach would be taking over a football program that has not existed in over 50 years. However, lack of head coaching experience should not disqualify potential candidates. Being able to think outside the box will help make this project work better.

If the football team does return, it is essential to conduct an expansive head coaching search that covers multiple levels and leaves no stone unturned. Looking at National Football League (NFL) assistant coaches, FBS and FCS assistant coaches, and even high school head coaches. For this to work, the right head coach must be in place from the start.

In the modern era of college athletics, a team can be completely turned over and made competitive almost overnight. If Curt Cignetti can take Indiana University from the losingest FBS program to national champions in 781 days, then UTampa can build a football team competitive at the Division II or FCS level.

The Cignetti model can easily be applied on a smaller scale to a potential UTampa football return. Alignment between President Dahlberg and Athletic Director Brophy is essential for success and getting the program off the ground if the resources are obtained. Any potential head coach would need to be on the same page and share a similar vision for the program.

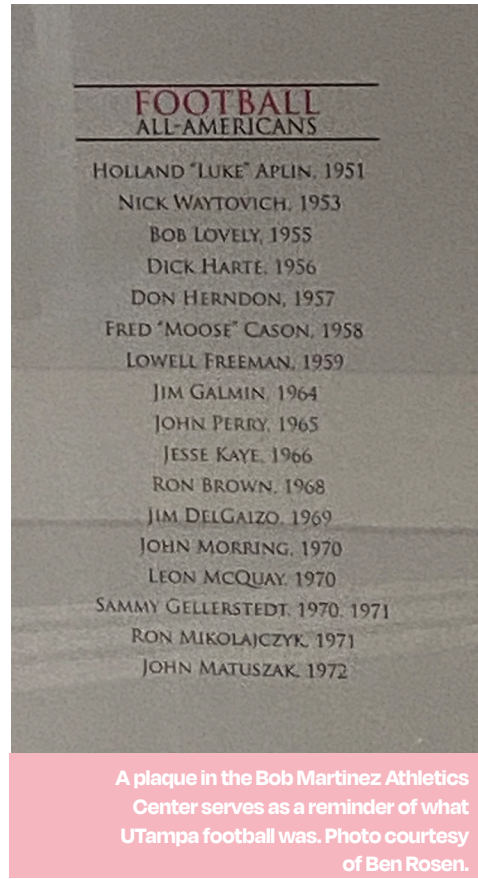
Seemingly, everyone laughed at Cignetti and called him crazy after his opening press conference at Indiana University. Now he is a national championship-winning head coach, in part because he believed in himself. Finding a head coach who believes

in themselves, similar to how Cignetti does, would be helpful for a returning UTampa football team.

While it may seem bold, returning by the start of the 2029 season can be done with the right buy-in to the idea and receiving enough financial investment in the program. If UTampa football does one day return, whoever is part of the leadership team that brings it back is deserving of a statue on campus.

Sometimes, as the classic saying goes, you have to spend money to make money. This is one of those cases. Raising the amount of money needed to make the program no longer dormant is a tall order. But with the right connections and fundraising strategy, it can be achieved. If the right people are on the same page, anything is possible.

A public fundraising campaign with the specific purpose of bringing back the football team could help achieve this goal. Both President Dahlberg and Athletic Director Brophy have experience with large fundraising campaigns and are the right people to oversee this effort. It is time to bring back UTampa football.



A plaque in the Bob Martinez Athletics Center serves as a reminder of what UTampa football was. Photo courtesy of Ben Rosen.



IndyCar Arrives in St. Petersburg: NASCAR Trucks Debut

By Terry Hunsicker

On Friday, Feb. 27, the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg began. The three-day motorsport event, located in downtown St. Pete on the waterfront, will feature the start of the NTT IndyCar Series and the INDY NXT season, as well as events from NASCAR's CRAFTSMAN Truck Series, the USF2000 Championship Series, and the Mazda MX-5 Cup Series.

Friday's events featured the first of two USF2000 races, practices for the IndyCar drivers, qualifiers for the MX-5 Cup, and the street-track debut for the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series. NASCAR Trucks will race on streets for the first time on Saturday, Feb. 28.

During a press conference, IndyCar driver Josef Newgarden of Team Penske said that he doesn't think anybody knows how the trucks and their tire rubber will affect IndyCar and the track quality during the weekend.

"So you just gotta be prepared for it and try to adjust," said Newgarden. "It'll just be a challenge that everyone's gotta go through."

NASCAR Trucks began practice runs at 4 p.m. At Turn 5 of the 14-turn course, trucks could be seen struggling to hit a consistent angle. After just 11 minutes, rain interrupted further events for the day and cancelled qualifying races. Connor Mosack was awarded pole position for Saturday's OnlyBulls Green Flag 150 through the metric score system. Pole position grants a driver the right to the first starting position of an official race.



The weather throughout the day was cloudy, with light fog in the morning. Despite the initial poor conditions, fans still arrived in droves. An assortment of food trucks and merchandise vendors were placed throughout the venue, encompassing Pioneer Park and the Salvador Dali museum, with often narrow pathways connecting fans to open standing and seating areas.

Early in the day, USF2000 held its qualifying rounds and first full race of the weekend. Sebastian Garzon, representing team DEForce Racing, won both pole position and the first race, having completed 20 laps in just 26 minutes and 37.7023 seconds.

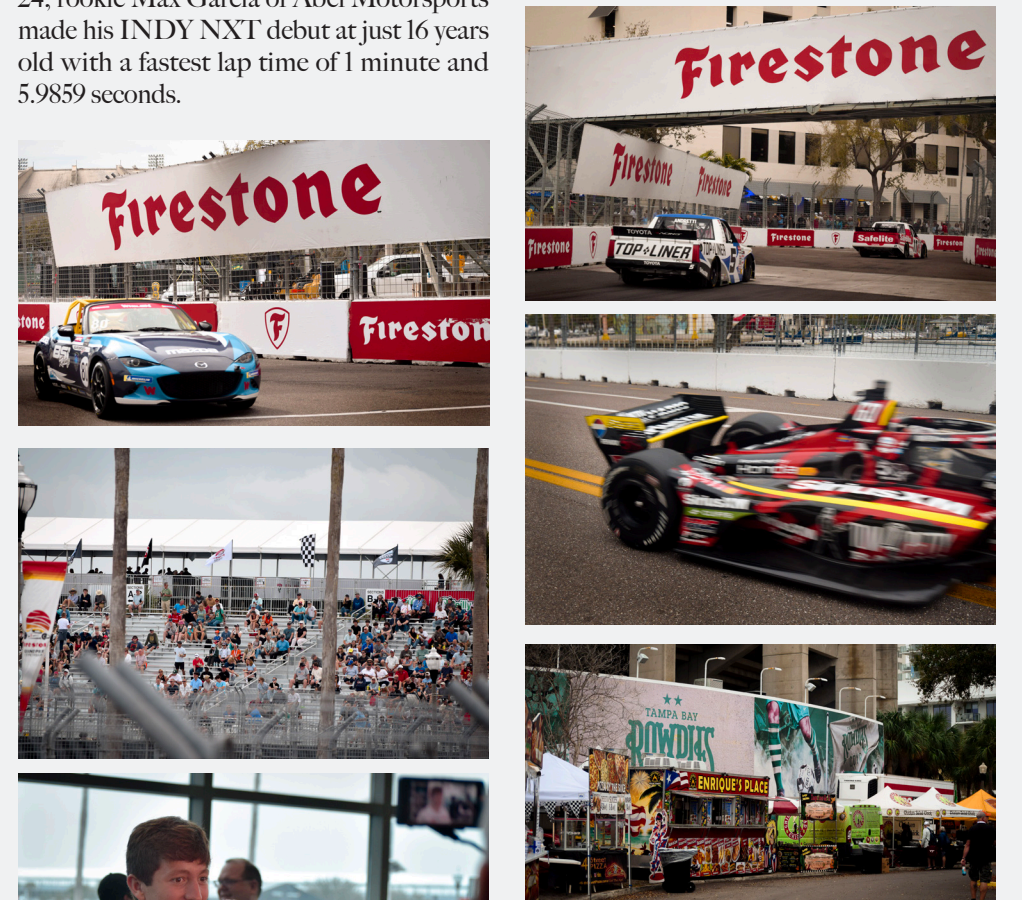
During the first practice session for INDY NXT, Max Taylor of team Andretti Global set the fastest lap speed. Placing 13 out of 24, rookie Max Garcia of Abel Motorsports made his INDY NXT debut at just 16 years old with a fastest lap time of 1 minute and 5.9859 seconds.

"It's what I've been working for," said Garcia. "I'm just really, really proud to call myself an INDY NXT driver."

Garcia won the USF2000 race at St. Pete in 2024. He said there were some minor changes compared to his last time on the course, such as a repaved road on Turn 4 and Turn 5 that he said could affect him and the other drivers.

"Every time I come to a street track, it's kind of a relearning process for me," said Garcia. "I always try and relearn the track."

During qualifying rounds for the Mazda MX-5 Cup, rookie Matt Novak earned pole position for the first of two MX-5 Cup races with a fastest lap time of one minute and 24.157 seconds. He will open the race and Saturday's Grand Prix events at 7:30 a.m.



Commencement of The St. Pete Grand Prix

Day 1 wasn't just a practice run; it was a statement. With its festive atmosphere and the aroma of pizza, burgers and hot dogs, the Grand Prix returned to the Tampa Bay Region with speed and anticipation. NASCAR Craftsman trucks made history in St. Pete, with their first-ever debut on the street course in over 30 years. However, due to the severe weather, fans and cars had to evacuate quickly, cutting their practice short. This storm did not dampen the spirits of the fans nor the drivers, considering Max Garcia, a 16-year-old rookie, was eager to make his INDYCAR debut after winning the USF Pro Championship in 2024 and 2025.

"I have been working to get in here for the last three years, so I'm just really proud to call myself an Indy NXT driver and really get this year going," said Garcia.

In practice, Garcia placed 13th out of the 24 drivers and has qualifiers at the end of the second day. Now that all eyes are on Saturday's qualifying races, fans are eager to find out who will take home the title of Firestone Grand Prix Champion.

Grand Prix of St. Pete: OnlyBulls Green Flag 150.

On Saturday, Feb. 28, in St. Petersburg, NASCAR held the OnlyBulls Green Flag 150. It is the first time that the NASCAR Craftsman series has raced on a street course. Layne Riggs won the race, leading for 41 of 80 laps. Dario Franchitti made his return to professional racing, placing 27 in the overall field.

Photos courtesy Terry Hunsicker



Grand Prix of St. Petersburg: Layne Riggs Wins OnlyBulls Green Flag 150

By Terry Hunsicker

On Saturday, Feb. 28, day two of the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Layne Riggs won the OnlyBulls Green Flag 150 NASCAR Truck race. The 80-lap, 36-truck race is the first street-course race in NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series history. Riggs claimed the trophy after spending 41 total laps in first, leading for the final 18 laps. Ty Majeski claimed second place after a fierce battle with third-place winner Ben Rhodes during the final two laps. All three podium members represented teams associated with Ford.

"It was a lot of fun racing here in St. Pete," said Riggs during a press conference.

Despite most of the practice window and all NASCAR qualifying races being rained out on the previous day, the race only saw six

total caution flags lasting for 17 laps. Riggs said that he felt that everybody was weird at the start of the race due to the unfamiliarity, but that he had the upper hand.

"I didn't get a single clean lap in," Riggs said. "I think we might have not had that much of an edge if we did have a bunch of practices."

Marcus Ericsson, who finished later in the day with a second-place finish in the NTT IndyCar qualifiers, said that while the rubber from the truck tires caused him to experience less tire grip, it didn't affect his balance.

"It wasn't a big, big thing for me," Ericsson said.

Day two of the Grand Prix saw large crowds appear for the Truck race. Dario Franchitti, who hadn't appeared in a professional race since 2013, made his return to NASCAR driving truck No. 1 for the team

Dollar Tree Toyota. Before the start of the race, Franchitti was introduced to the crowd with a loud cheer from the full grandstands.

"I would love to come back," Riggs said. "I could not believe how packed the grandstands are. I thought we were in the IndyCar show."

Franchitti finished the race 27th out of 36. However, at the end of the first and second stages, which split the first 40 laps of a race, Franchitti was positioned sixth and eighth, respectively.

Before the trucks began their race at 12:32 p.m., the NTT IndyCar Series and INDY NXT held second practice sessions. Following the truck race at about 4 p.m., both IndyCar affiliates completed their qualifying races.

Scott McLaughlin won pole position for Sunday's NTT IndyCar race with a best

lap time of one minute and 0.5426 seconds. Ericsson finished second in the qualifiers, behind McLaughlin by only .0195 of a second. Max Taylor qualified with pole position for INDY NXT's race, completing the track in one minute and 4.8887 seconds.

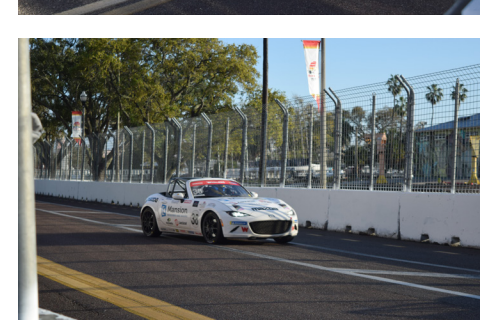
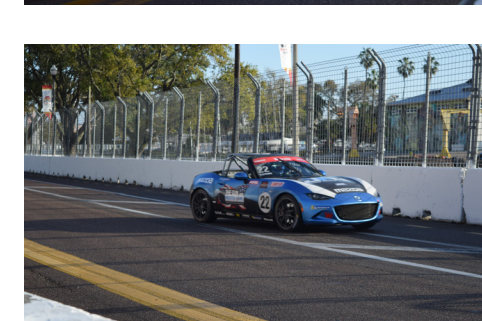
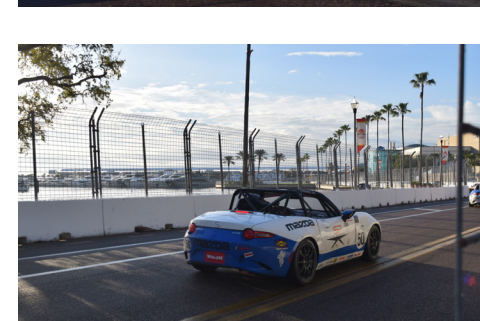
McLaughlin has finished with pole position three times in five years at St. Pete, winning the race in 2022.

"Maybe I need to move to Florida," said McLaughlin. "I don't know what it is, but I love this place."

The Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete concludes on Sunday, March 1, with a 45-lap INDY NXT race at 10:06 a.m. and the main event, a 100-lap NTT IndyCar Series race at 12:29 p.m. In addition, the event will conclude with two more final races. One for USF2000 and closing the three-day festival with the second Mazda MX-5 Cup race.



Grand Prix of St. Pete: Mazda MX-5 Cup Race 1



On Saturday, Feb. 28, in St. Petersburg, day two of the three-day Firestone Grand Prix opened with the first of two races associated with the Mazda MX-5 Cup series. The race was won by Bobby Gossett, who drove through poor, wet track conditions to complete the 23-lap race.

Photos courtesy of Terry Hunsicker

Grand Prix of St. Petersburg: Alex Palou Wins NTT Series Opener

By Terry Hunsicker

On Sunday, March 1, Alex Palou claimed first place in the NTT IndyCar season opener at the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. The main event of the three-day motorsports festival, Palou earned 53 points on his quest for a repeat NTT IndyCar Series championship.

The reigning series champion, Palou, took home the trophy with a dominant performance, leading in 59 of the 100 laps and the final 30 laps. Palou took the lead on lap 42 following the second of only two caution flags during the race, surrendering the lead for only two laps before the finish. Despite the strong performance, Palou said he felt beatable.

"It's not easy to win races, although it might seem like it," said Palou. "It takes a lot of stuff to go well for it to happen."

Palou said while he would celebrate the win on Sunday night, he would be back at work preparing for races the next day.

"Are we gonna be amazingly fast, or are we just gonna be slow? Nobody knows. So, we take it one step at a time," Palou said.

Barry Wanser, Palou's strategist and formerly the senior manager of Palou's team Chip Ganassi Racing, before a recent retirement from the role, said the decision to start on fresh alternate tires and use one of his two sets of alternate tires during the final round of qualifying on Saturday helped Palou go the distance on Sunday despite failing to win pole position.

"We started on the sticker reds which we knew was a bit of a risk to not save those, the best tires, for last but it worked out," said Wanser.

Scott McLaughlin and Christian Lundgaard, who shared the podium with Palou at second and third, respectively, each started the race on primary tires. McLaughlin won pole position the previous day during qualifiers and held the lead until lap 34.

"I think they were on the right strategy today with the tire, and that's, that's the decision they made compared to us," said McLaughlin.

The NTT Series opener was not the only race of the day. On Saturday, NASCAR made Craftsman Truck Series history by having its first street-course race. INDY NXT opened Sunday's races with its own variant of the St. Pete Grand Prix race, and USF2000 and the Mazda MX-5 Cup series each held their second races of the weekend following the NTT series race.

Indy NXT witnessed 17-year-old rookie driver Nikita Johnson earn first place in his hometown of St. Pete, overtaking pole-sitter and second-place finisher Max Taylor at the start of the 42-lap race to win without ever giving up the lead. Johnson previously won on the St. Pete course in 2024 as part of the USF Pro 2000 series and in 2023 with the USF2000 series.

When asked about his plans to celebrate at home, Johnson said he would have an early night, but his friends and family might not.

"I'll probably hear them from my room and

have to put AirPods in, but we'll see what happens. Hopefully, I'll get to sleep," said Johnson.

Following the conclusion of the NTT series race, USF2000 held its second race of the weekend. Sebastian Garzon, winner and pole-sitter for race one, claimed a second win during race two.

The weekend festival concluded with race two for the Mazda MX-5 cup series in St. Pete, won by Justin Adakonis. Adakonis, pole-sitter for race two, leaped from his performance in race one, where he placed 35th overall after failing to complete the full 23 laps.

NTT IndyCar will continue its season at the Good Ranchers 250 in Phoenix on March 7. INDY NXT's next race is on March 15 at the Grand Prix of Arlington in Arlington, Texas, and both the Mazda MX-5 cup series and the USF2000 will return on the weekend of April 14-16 at the Indianapolis Grand Prix circuit.



Wrapping Up the St. Pete Grand Prix

The Final Day of the 2026 St. Pete Grand Prix was unforgettable, with record-breaking performances and history made. Alex Palou, a 28-year-old Spaniard, didn't just win, but took the victory with the largest margin in over 23 years. While his victory came as no surprise to many fans, Palou was not self-assured with the next race set in Phoenix on March 6. His goal is to continue to work hard with his team to generate these types of results. As for the NXT developmental series, 17-year-old St. Pete native Nikita Johnson won his first race as a full-time driver. A hometown win is nothing new for Johnson, winning both USF2000 and USF Pro 2000 races in 2023 and 2024 and has now added another to the list. Johnson's recent success signals a promising future, as it was his fourth race in the NXT series and his first with Cape Motorsports. The St. Pete Grand Prix had a thrilling finish with a new star emerging, records being broken, and the most electrifying crowd.

Photos courtesy of Isabella Ferrero

University of Tampa Men's and Women's Swim Teams Win SSC Championship

By Jeremy Fishman

On Feb. 15, the University of Tampa men's and women's swim teams won the Sunshine State Conference (SSC) Championships. The men secured their fourth consecutive SSC title and fifth overall, while the women won their second consecutive title and third overall, continuing UTampa's dominance in the conference.

Both teams finished ahead of second-place Nova Southeastern University, outscoring them by 288 on the men's side and 142 points on the women's. After the championship, the College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association of America ranked the women first and the men third nationally.

In 2025, the women's team won the conference by five points, meaning this season's margin was a significant jump. During the regular

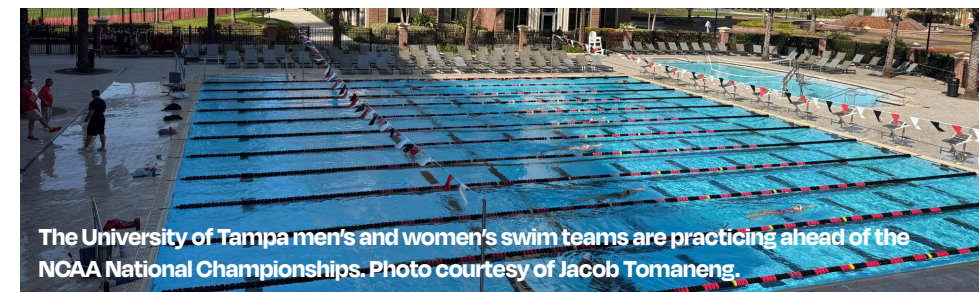
season and SSC Championships, they consistently won by larger margins than last season. Darcy Highmore, a junior swimmer, said their dominance since day one has shown their strength and progression.

"Spirits have been so high in training," said Highmore. "It's such an amazing group of girls."

Highmore struggled with a shoulder injury this season and has not qualified for the NCAA Championships. She said she is proud of her teammates and glad she trained alongside them. She also said the swimmers who aren't going to Indiana usually get together for a watch party.

"We're always the first people to go over and congratulate [the swimmers competing] or send a text well done," said Highmore. "It's still amazing to be part of the team and watch my best friends do this."

Despite winning their fourth consecutive SSC title, the men's roster looked significantly different



The University of Tampa men's and women's swim teams are practicing ahead of the NCAA National Championships. Photo courtesy of Jacob Tomaneng.

from last season. The Spartans lost and graduated a total of 16 swimmers and brought in 20 newcomers, forcing them to adjust early on.

"At the beginning of the year, we were such a new team," said Davis Adcock, a junior swimmer. "It definitely took a while to adjust."

The men overcame those challenges and defeated each of their conference opponents.

"Towards the end of the year... we finally meshed well and clicked and finally started being a team," said Adcock.

Adcock credited the coaching staff for the program's success this season.

"They're the ones pushing us and making us better," said Adcock. "They have a pretty big role in the fact that we won four [SSC Championships] in a row, and it wouldn't happen without them."

With the conference championship secured, the Spartans are fully focused on competing in the NCAA DII Championships in Indiana. Oliver Pope, a junior swimmer, described it as the main event. The preparation has varied across the men's and women's rosters. Some swimmers tapered and adjusted their training ahead of the conference championship to secure the times needed to qualify for nationals, while others were able to swim through the event, saving their energy for Indiana.

UTampa looks to use its momentum to live up to its strong expectations. The latest SwimSwam psych sheet ranked the men's and women's teams third nationally. Pope said this has added fuel to their fire. The Spartans will compete for nationals March 10-14 in Evansville, Indiana.

times. While the 400-meter race isn't easy at all, UTampa's runners glided all through those 400 meters. Eliczer Nicolas, a freshman on the UTampa team, finished as UTampa's top performer with a time of 49.24 seconds.

"The 400-meter was very long but quick at the same time," said Nicolas. "If I could change something about that race, I would change my start and come out a little bit faster."

On the longer side of the track, many top performances were run in both the 3,000 and 1,500-meter races for both the men and women on the team. Elijah Rivera, a freshman on the UTampa team, secured a second-place overall finish with a time of eight minutes and 32 seconds for the 3,000-meter race, falling behind Siyabonga Mokgothu, a junior on Florida Gulf Coast University's track team.

Will Cerrutti clocked a time of 3 minutes, 57 seconds for the 1,500 meters, earning UTampa a third-place overall finish. At the same distance on the women's team, Hanna Diete, a sophomore, was a top performer for the team, scoring a second-place overall win with a time of 4:35.52.

From explosive sprints to hard-fought distance events, the track athletes on the UTampa team showed out. Based on the results of this meet, the track season is off to a strong start, setting the track for more personal records and school records.



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith

Track Season Officially Starts in Tampa

By Tiffany Bobadilla

On Feb. 21, 2026, at Pepin Stadium, 11 universities traveled to Tampa for the annual Spartans Open meet. Universities such as Barry, Florida Gulf Coast, Stetson, Palm Beach Atlantic, Nova Southeastern, and Eckerd all gathered together for this exciting meet.

The top results of this meet were dominated by UTampa, Nova Southeastern, Lynn, and Barry University. UTampa's

runners placed top five in 16 out of 22 overall events that were run at this meet.

The meeting started at 4 p.m. with the 400-meter hurdles, an event that the University of Tampa dominated by taking places 1-5. The fastest clocked time for the women was a one-minute and one-second run by Allie Murphy, a senior on the UTampa track and field team. As the evening progressed, UTampa continued to show dominance and clocked outstanding times in various events.

The men's 4x100-meter relay was run by Collin Kavulic, Daniel Raffin, Jayden

Leonard, and Calvin Jordan with a time of 41.49. All running splits of 11 seconds, making the overall time a new program best. The previous school record was held on April 19, 2025, at the Sunshine State Conference Championships with a time of 41.98 seconds.

The men's relay team wasn't the only one that had a successful evening. The women's 4x100-meter relay team led throughout the three exchanges of this race. The relay team of Sarah Martinez, Allison Murphy, Molly Morris, and Chloe Green clocked an impressive 47.83 seconds, earning them a win.

Meanwhile, UTampa clocked outstanding times in the area of short sprints, and the middle-distance sprinters also had impressive



Spartans Commemorate Championship With Ring Presentation

The University of Tampa beach volleyball team received its championship rings Friday, Feb. 13, 2026, following its third consecutive national title. The Spartans open their home season Friday, Feb. 20, as they begin their bid for a fourth straight championship.

Photo Courtesy of Hannah Walls.



Pro Athletes are Heading Back to College, Even at UTampa

By Jacob Tomaneng

Controversy surrounding a recent surge of young, professional athletes returning to collegiate athletics has intensified. Whether the former professionals seek to earn money from NIL or to gain higher education, college sports and recruiting at the University of Tampa and around the United States is changing.

The National Federation for High School Sports reported that less than 2% of NCAA athletes play professional sports after leaving college. However, some men's basketball and baseball players have returned to the collegiate level.

University of Alabama basketball player Charles Bediako, who's a center, was booed and chanted at, with the University of Florida crowd calling him a "G League dropout" during an away game on Sunday, Feb. 1. These chants continued at Alabama's following road game against their in-state rival, Auburn.

"I think it's a little odd for players to play in college at that point in their career," said 19-year-old college sports fan Michael Schulze.

In multiple press conferences after former NBA draft pick James Nnaji returned to

Baylor University, national championship-winning coaches critiqued the NCAA for allowing professional players to return to college athletics.

"Shame on the NCAA," said Michigan State men's basketball coach Tom Izzo to ESPN. "Because coaches are going to do what they've got to do, I guess."

But NCAA Division I men's basketball is not the sole place professionals are going. UTampa's Division II baseball program has had multiple players who formerly signed minor league contracts play after their time in pro systems. Spartan infielder A.J. Graham has been on the roster since the Spartans' 2024-2025 season after being drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2021. Graham played three seasons in the Pirates organization before being released on Feb. 18, 2024.

"We actually have had five guys total [play in college after playing professionally]," said UTampa baseball's assistant coach and recruiting director, Jose Jimenez. "These 17 and 18-year-olds are making decisions to go sign, play professionally out of high school, and if it doesn't work out for them, what do they do then?"

Graham, who is now a 24-year-old sophomore, has played in 9 out of the 12



Former Pittsburgh Pirates draft pick and current UTampa Baseball infielder A.J. Graham lines up at the start of the 2026 season. Photo courtesy of Hannah Walls.

games so far this spring, recording a batting average of .333 with two home runs.

Jimenez told *The Minaret* that he does not plan on recruiting at professional events, but he does check release lists from professional organizations.

ESPN reported that University of Arkansas men's basketball coach John Calipari said, "Who other than dumb people like me are going to recruit high school kids? I get so much satisfaction out of coaching young kids and seeing them grow and make it, and their family and life changes, that I'm going to keep doing it. But why would anybody else, if you can get NBA players, G

League players, guys that are 28 years old, guys from Europe?"

As the future of collegiate recruiting changes, UTampa director of athletics, Dr. E.J. Brophy, and Jimenez are following the rules while still holding to their values.

"I vehemently disagree with being a pro, crossing the Rubicon, becoming a professional athlete, and then saying, 'you know what, this ain't for me yet,'" said Brophy. "I completely disagree with the rules, but I completely agree with bringing young people here to get one of the best educations in the country."

Practice Made Public: The Reality of Open Practice Areas at UTampa

By Wandalie Marie Taveras

You wouldn't typically expect to find yourself spectating an official swimming team practice while tanning, much less before they have a big competition. At the University of Tampa, it is simply part of the routine.

The men's and women's swimming team practices are at the Riseman Aquatic Center, more commonly known as the campus pool. No one bats an eye when the swimmers come in and start training. Students tap away on their computers or adjust their sunglasses while the swimmers stretch and chat. They power through the lanes while their classmates lounge poolside. The consistent recurrence of this situation raises questions about how this affects student-athletes' mentality.

"It's all about self-discipline," said Avery Frece, a sophomore on the UTampa women's swim team.

Maintaining this mentality is simple when referring to students these athletes don't personally know. On the other hand, it might be more challenging to ignore close

friends and significant others. It is a true test of their mental toughness and consistency when training. The open practice area forces athletes to stay present and committed while their peers go about their day.

As the swim team shifts its focus to making it to the NCAA DII National Championship, self-discipline is going to be essential.

Most sports teams on campus train behind closed doors. The baseball and softball teams typically train in a stadium, while the basketball and volleyball teams train on the indoor courts. Students typically only see these athletes perform on gameday. Most students never witness a failed attempt at a new skill, moments of mental struggle, or the breakthrough moments that might only be observed in a closed practice.

The beach volleyball team, similar to the swim team, trains in a shared student facility. No matter the level of athleticism, playing beach volleyball in the Benson Alex Riseman Fitness and Recreation Center is a frequent recreational activity for UTampa students. The big question is: should students be allowed access to these facilities during official team practice?



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith.

"I think everybody should have the right to be by the pool... I think it is one of the most exciting things about UTampa," said Frece.

Hanging out by the campus pool between classes has become a significant part of the UTampa experience. The peaceful nature of this space has become a distinguishing factor in the reasons students attend the university. Students go to the campus pool for many different reasons, whether that is to study, unwind, or simply ignore the pressure

of academic life for a few moments. A subtle sense of community exists as students and athletes share the same space. The campus pool is one of the few places where varsity athletics and everyday student life coexist.

These swimmers are in a unique situation, but to them, it has become a normal part of life. Their practice happens out in the open, surrounded by the community that they represent.



Men's Basketball Team Wins 76-65 against Lynn University

After a strong finish, the Spartans managed to secure a 76-65 win over Lynn University in the Sunshine State Conference. Despite an intense comeback attempt from Lynn, the Spartans showcased their determination and hard work on both offense and defense ultimately securing the win on home court.

Photos courtesy of Genesis Muckele



Photo courtesy of Hannah Walls.



Getting Game Ready for the Beginning of Conference Play

By Lilly Bouchard

On Thursday, UTampa baseball practiced at Bailey Field, while they physically and mentally get ready for Sunshine State Conference play.

UTampa baseball is hungrier than ever to get an 11th ring this season, as that is shown on and off the field. Preparation is key as the Spartans are the talk of the top of the ranking in the conference. They plan to use that energy for success, which is what they have already shown.

"This year coming in with a target on your chest and playing the same brand of baseball

as we always do and relying on each other will lead to success," said senior second baseman Brayden Woodburn.

Last year, the Spartans faced the Lions three different times in conference play. The first two games they won, the first game 8-4 and the second 7-0. The last game they lost 4-2. With 23 new players on the Spartans' roster, the Lions don't know what is coming for them.

Catcher and top hitter Jhoander Irigoyen said, "So far we have shown we are capable of doing so many great things."

"St. Leo has a different staff, but we are still going to play ball and do the best we can

to win the series," said Irigoyen.

Coach Urso touches on that, "It starts with the leadership and returning guys, like Woodburn, Irigoyen, King, those are the guys that have to bring the new guys in about our culture and represent us with pride, which they are doing a great job."

That leadership will be on and off the field as always, but more than usual in the dugout this year, as junior Maddox King is out for the rest of the season, as he broke his hand and had surgery this past Tuesday.

"I am going to try to be a leader in the dugout," he said. "The expectation is to be on top of the mountain every year, and we don't plan on losing; that's the goal."

Urso is happy with the performance the team has brought to pre-conference games, as their statistics show just that.

"Overall outstanding. The starting pitching, defense, hitting for power, stolen bases, and all aspects of the game, I am very happy with. Now we have to find that consistency while we go into conference play, where it will only be harder competition," Urso says.

As a team, they do have strategies to clear their minds before big moments, such as conference game openers like playing hacky sack to get game-ready, said Robert Satin.

"We are three weekends in, so I got down my traditions of what I do," he said. "This year I don't have a Friday class, so I lie in bed and get food at 1 p.m., head to the field

and stay locked in during the week, take care of my body after, and that's pretty much it."

Satin started off the weekend at the mound with a successful performance as the Spartans swept the Lions in the three-game series.

Urso is more than happy with how the Spartans have looked all pre-season.

"Overall outstanding. The starting pitching, defense, hitting for power, stolen bases, and all aspects of the game, I am very happy with. Now we have to find that consistency while we go into conference play, where it will only be harder competition," Urso says.

Jake Books, a transfer from Coastal Carolina, has adjusted well to the new program with the 22 other players, as the trust between the players and the coaches means the most to him and reflects on how well their performances are.

"Between the coaching staff, there are a lot of similarities in being prepared, like coming to practice of how the details matter, and both coaching staff have those same intentions," he said.

"We know the targets on our back, we embrace it," he said. "Stay away from the elephant in the room: We know we are the best, and we play like it."

That is exactly what the Spartans are proving and will continue to prove through conference play.

Sun Score Three Goals in Season's Second Win Over Rivals

By Lena Malpeli

The Sun has finally risen to the challenge. At Saturday's Florida Derby, the Tampa Bay Sun found their second win of the season over rivals Fort Lauderdale United FC. The Sun cemented their win with two goals from forwards Sydney Nasello and Faith Webber, who scored her first professional goal in the Super League.

The Sun (2-6-9) has had a disappointing season following their inaugural championship year, currently ranked at the bottom of the league behind Fort Lauderdale. The Sun, who have never lost to Fort Lauderdale, broke a series of draws and losses since their early November win against Spokane Zephyr FC.

"We've been doing this all season," said Head Coach Denise Schilte-Brown, "We'll score, or get this equalizer, and then settle into mediocrity. Tonight we didn't do that, and that was really great to see."

The Sun struck first in the 12th minute with Nasello, who sprinted after a blocked shot and firmly lifted the ball over the United keeper into the upper left-hand side. United nearly equalized soon after in the 21st minute, but Sun goalkeeper Emory Wegener saved a left-footed shot heading towards the bottom left corner of the goal.

Wegener, who also stopped a breakaway in the 62nd minute with a reactive kick save, may have strengthened her case for the Sun's starting XI, which has rotated its goalkeeper spot all season.

"Nothing changes. Whether you're starting, whether you're the backup," said Wegener, but celebrated the shutout as an "amazing" feeling.

"You can't stop smiling. You want to cry a little bit. And—it leaves you speechless," she said.

The Sun continued to put pressure on Fort Lauderdale, winning 50-50 balls and pressing quickly on the counterattack. The game was physical; the Sun committed 17 fouls, and

Photo courtesy of Lena Malpeli.



two Sun players received yellow cards, which Schilte-Brown said come with the derby territory.

"This is a gritty league," said Schilte-Brown. "Any time you have a derby, it's going to be a little bit tougher, and you've got to be prepared for that, and I think the ladies were well up for that tonight."

The pressure awarded a penalty kick for the Sun in the 62nd minute, and Sydney Nasello converted to make the score two-nil.

In the 83rd minute, Sun midfielder Sandrine Gaillard nutmegged a ball through

towards Webber inside the penalty box, where Webber slipped the goal past the keeper's left in a deft one-touch strike. Webber, on loan from the NWSL, is still getting to know her teammates but said the job is always the same: put the ball into the back of the net.

"I feel like, whenever I go on the field, I always expect to score. For the last—however many years I've been playing soccer—I feel like that's my job."

The next game for the Sun occurs on March 13th, away against Carolina Ascent FC, fourth in the league.

On Senior Day, the Spartans Defeated Palm Beach Atlantic 75-42

By Jaide Edwards

It was senior day, and the University of Tampa women's basketball team played a game that was worthy of celebration. The Spartans defeated Palm Beach Atlantic (PBA) 75-42 to cap the regular season.

Tampa appeared locked in from the very beginning, with tipoff at 2 p.m. With the starting lineup, guards sophomore Giorgia Palmieri, junior Olivia Davis, and sophomore Amy Thompson. Adding graduate forward Alanis Diaz and junior center Ryan Franklin.

Palm Beach Atlantic scored first, but Thompson put an end to any early concerns by making a three-pointer to give the Spartans the lead. Franklin started working inside right away, managing the glass and scoring in the paint.

It was no coincidence that there was an inside presence. Alanis Diaz, the senior forward, highlighted that they had a strategy before entering.

"Since two of our better players were injured, it made it easier to defend them since their role players had to step into more of a scoring role," said Diaz. "We knew they played

an unorthodox zone, so we just adjusted to that."

She continued, saying that's just their philosophy to keep playing inside out.

Tampa used defensive pressure and second-chance opportunities to gain separation, and by the end of the first quarter, they had a 17-14 lead.

According to head coach Thomas Jessee, their team develops defensive focus each week.

"We prepare for each game the same way," Jessee said. "We talk about how we will guard the best players and our strategy on defending our home court. Same goal each Saturday is to have a 1 and 0 day."

The game completely changed in the second quarter.

Before Diaz made a quick jumper, Franklin started the period at the line. Later, Franklin made an and-one that got everyone on their feet. Thompson stretched the Sailfish defense and made difficult rotations by shooting timely three-pointers.

In the meantime, PBA was still overpowered by UTampa's internal influence. Pickens stormed the lane for crucial points, while Maddie O'Berski, freshman guard, battled for a rebound and completed her own putback.

The Spartans' fierce defense constrained the Sailfish's clean looks, and Tampa gradually increased the lead. The scoreboard showed 39-19 at halftime, a 20-point lead going into the intermission.

After halftime, Tampa wasted no time.

Thompson made her fifth three-pointer of the game to start the third quarter. The Spartans increased their lead possession by possession after Franklin's jumper and Palmieri's layup inside.

Pickens continued her career-high 20-point outburst by going 2-for-2 from the line and finishing through contact. Franklin finished a strong afternoon with 19 points and 15 rebounds with another and-one.

Tampa had a 57-29 lead at the end of the third quarter.

The fourth quarter turned into a celebration. Brooklyn Butler, sophomore forward, made a three-pointer to start the period, and Tampa's bench continued to play significant minutes. The game was decided by the Spartans' 30 bench points and 50-27 rebound advantage over PBA.

By the time the final buzzer blew, Tampa had won 75-42, limiting the Sailfish to just 24.6% shooting.

With 20 points, four rebounds, and a block, Pickens led all scorers. With 19 points and 15 rebounds, Franklin recorded a double-double. Thompson made five 3-pointers to end with 15 points.

UTampa Catholic's OCIA Program Sees Growth as Students Seek Conversion on Campus

By Genesis Aviles

As interest in faith-based organizations grows among young adults, Catholic leaders at UTampa say they are seeing that trend reflected on campus.

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) is the process through which individuals prepare to become Catholic or complete sacraments such as baptism, first Communion, and confirmation.

At UTampa, the program is offered through the student organization UTampa Catholic in partnership with Christ the King Catholic Church.

Classes and Masses are held at the Sykes Chapel and Center for Faith and Values, located in the center of campus. Confessions are offered twice a week, Tuesdays from 7 to 8 p.m. and Sundays from 7:30 to 8 p.m. The group also hosts weekly Mass, Bible studies, adoration, and liturgical celebrations such as Ash Wednesday.

Collin Likover, director of Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) missionaries at UTampa Catholic, said participation has increased significantly in recent years.

"So, first and foremost, before our organization got here, there were only like five to 10 people going to Mass every Sunday," said Likover. "Now there are over 200 people going to Mass every Sunday."

Likover, 30, who lives in Tampa, said the OCIA program was launched last year after leaders noticed a growing number of students interested in becoming Catholic.

"Last year we had 18 people become Catholic," said Likover. "And then this year we have 30 people in the class. So overall, 48 people in the last two years."

The process begins in October and continues through Easter. Students attend weekly classes on Sunday evenings and participate in specific rites during Mass as they prepare to receive their sacraments.

"It's the same process because we're connected to Christ the King Catholic Church," said Likover. "We just happen to teach the classes here for accessibility for the students."

Likover said he believes broader cultural factors may contribute to the rise in participation.

"There are a lot of various forms of struggle, spiritual struggle in our country," said Likover.



Faith Pickens (No. 14) helped UTampa defeat Palm Beach Atlantic on Senior Day with a career-high 20 points, four rebounds, an assist, and a block. Photo courtesy of Genesis Muckle.

Tampa turns its focus to postseason matches after the regular season is over, and head coach Thomas Jessee believes the team is at its best right now.

"The team has shown great improvement during each game and is playing our best basketball heading into our conference tournament next week," Jessee said. "Super proud of them."

continued from page 1.

Chesley said. "I also love building my leadership skills in the sorority. I have a great executive board and great people underneath me to help build our organization up."

Chesley said she was thrilled to witness campus unity at the rally and that she and several of her sorority sisters would be going to the basketball game afterward.

"I love seeing everyone come together — all the different organizations collaborating," she said. "It's fun to see everybody out here before the basketball game."

Senior Kyle Gianni, vice president of UTSGA, said the event had been planned for months. The USF vs. UTampa baseball game last semester served as the initial spark for the idea, but organizers soon recognized they needed more time to carry it out on a wider scale. To guarantee widespread participation, the student government collaborated with the university administration and athletics leadership, contacted coaches and fraternity and sorority life, and established connections with other departments.

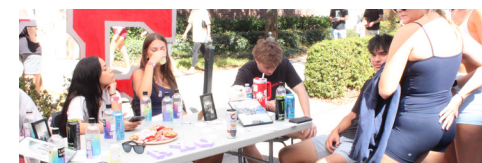
"It was really just trying to get the entire student body involved," Gianni said. "Athletics is super important. We want to support each other in a mission that's larger than yourselves. You have to be a villager in a village — this is one of those moments."

Gianni believed that the environment was more important to success than attendance numbers.

"This has never been done before," he said. "Even our advisors who've been here for over 20 years said this is one of the coolest things they've seen student government do. I'm just very, very proud."

Students carried their excitement into the stands later that day by the rally's strategic location, which took place the afternoon before the women's basketball game.

The first Spartan Rally at UTampa was more than just a gathering; it was a statement about community. Student Government produced an experience focused on participation, pride, and Spartan togetherness by closing off a street and creating a space for connection.



The University of Tampa Hosts its First Spartan Rally

To celebrate the last home game for both the men's and women's basketball teams, the student government, student productions, and fraternity and sorority life came together to shut down the street between the Martinez Center and the Ferman Center of Arts to host the first Spartan Rally.

Photos courtesy of Genesis Muckle



Seeing Red: Beyond The Page

By Kawthar A. Ebrahim

For the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGS) Book Club at the University of Tampa, choosing a graphic novel enhances visual literacy and makes for an easy read. In the red pages of Renee Nault's graphic novel adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Gilead exceeds storytelling and enters the realm of visual warnings.

"It's one thing to read about something horrible. It's another thing to see it with your own eyes," said Paige Horton, club attendee and WGS minor.

The club helps students see the haunting reality of propaganda, the way textbooks wouldn't provide contextual understanding and visual representation of authorial choices.

The WGS Book Club is led by Dr. Sarah Fryett and Dr. Claire Class, who designed the club to bridge the gap between the classroom and communal connection. Since its initiation in the Fall 2024 semester, the club has explored *Genderqueer*, *The Black Flamingo*, and a collection of poetry.



"The Handmaid's Tale: The Graphic Novel" by Margaret Atwood. Photo courtesy of Charles S. Kahlenberg

These titles are intentionally picked to challenge students to think about marginalized identities.

"We found that the graphic novel really was a great text for students to speak about not only the story, but the images represented," Dr. Fryett said.

These "haunting" visuals serve as a great introduction to start discussing heavy topics such as state control and reproductive rights, especially without the pressure of academic validation and graded environments.

The breakdown of academic and financial barriers really sets the WGS Book Club apart from other clubs on campus. On a campus where socioeconomic diversity is often assumed to be non-existent, the Department of English and Writing and the College of Arts and Letters have accounted for it, ensuring that the WGS Program can provide every student with a free copy of their book.

"People are very confused about what's true." "I think that, in this generation, people are going to faith to find not only meaning, but also to find truth," he said.

Anthony Cavallo, a UTampa student from Huntington, New York, helps lead OCIA classes and Bible studies. He said his motivation comes from his understanding of Christian teaching.

"What inspired me most to help lead these classes comes primarily from Jesus' last words he said on earth," said Cavallo. "My love for Jesus inspires my love for others, because to truly love someone else means to give myself without any reward."

Cavallo said he has observed a common theme among students who enroll in the program.

"What I notice in all the students who desire to be converted is humility, and hunger for something deeper," he said. "College is the place where most individuals try to discover what the purpose of their life is."

UTampa Catholic leaders emphasize that participation is voluntary. There are no dues or required commitments, and students are free to attend events as they choose. In addition to OCIA, 32 different leaders host weekly Bible studies.

Lauren Forster, a student at UTampa, said she decided to enroll in OCIA after hearing an announcement at her first campus Mass.

"Once I got to UTampa, the first Mass made an announcement about going through OCIA to become Catholic," said Forster.

"I felt a calling to formally go through the process and become fully Catholic."

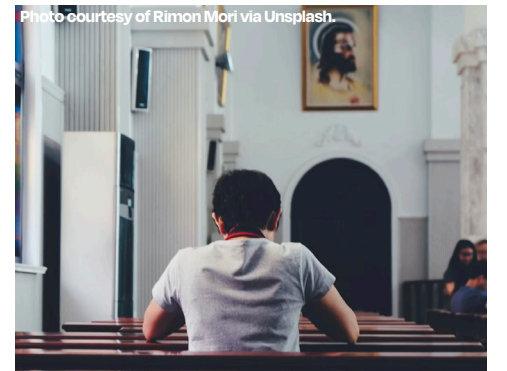
Although she grew up attending church with her family, Forster had not been baptized or confirmed. She said the experience has helped her better understand her faith.

"The experience has been amazing," said Forster. "I've learned so much about the faith and history of the Church."

Forster said going through the process during college has been meaningful.

"Being able to go through this in college and meet some of my best friends is an amazing thing," she said.

As the current OCIA class continues to meet weekly throughout the spring semester, the time is approaching for students to receive their sacraments this Easter at Christ the King Church, where they will officially become part of the Catholic faith as FOCUS and UTampa Catholic continue to make Catholic worship and instruction accessible to students on campus.



discussing reproductive rights, a topic she admits can be difficult to navigate in a wide campus climate.

"[UTampa] isn't the safest space for people who are caring about women's rights and reproductive rights," she said, "so being part of this minor has allowed me to express the things that I'm passionate about and not worry about getting backlash."

The visual representation of the regime from the novel serves as a mirror to modern political tensions around the world, even for those who have never read the story or watched the famous TV series.

Parray describes how seeing the propaganda and the "haunting" visuals makes these huge issues feel more urgent, and helps students empathize with marginalized groups, which the "media tries to hide from you."

On a college campus that can sometimes feel isolating for international students and those in marginalized groups, the WGS Book Club is more than a club — it is a community that provides a rare sanctuary of comfort.

As Horton and Parray said, the support of professors like Dr. Fryett and Dr. Class provides students with the "motivation to keep working on my academic journey and to not give up hope."

No matter what they are reading, the message is always the same: at the WGS Book Club, everyone has a right to be heard.

The graphic novel is a powerful tool for

Pie a Captain and Guess the Song



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith

The second Greek week event was Pie-a-Captian and Guess The Song. During Guess The Song, two teams went head to head with two representatives from each. Each team had to correctly guess 8 songs, one from each band. To participate in Pie-a-Captian, students had to donate a minimum of \$3 that will go towards the total amount of money raised for each team where all proceeds go to The Mercyful Project. Once the money was donated, students were able to pie their Greek Week Captain or fellow members with shaving cream.

Baseball Game



To kick off Greek week, last Sunday, all competing FSL teams attended a UTampa Baseball game. With 4 different mini games in between innings, the stands were packed with students in Greek life cheering for Baseball and for their Greek week team. In this years Battle of The Bands ABBA, AC/DC, Black Eyed Peas, Destiny's Child, Queen, One Direction, *NSYNC, and Maroon 5 are all competing against each other all week to fundraise for The Mercyful Project.

Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith

Sidewalk Chalk



Greek Variety Show

The final event of Greek Week, Feb. 21, was the Greek Variety Show (GVS), where each team performed a 7 minute dance. Teams have been practicing since the second week of school on their performances hoping to not only win GVS but to win Greek Week overall. The Greek Week Winner was decided by the team who had the most points from participating Greek Week events combined with money raised which was announced after the final fundraiser during GVS. After the 8 teams put on amazing performances, judges ranked Team Maroon 5 in third, Team NSYNC and Team Queen tied for second, and Team Black Eyed Peas first. After final points were totaled, fundraiser donations totaled, the overall Greek Week Winner was Team NSYNC. Throughout the week, \$131,480.16 was raised and donated for the Mercy Full Project.



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith

The second event of Greek Week was the Sidewalk Chalk Face Off accompanied by The Mercyful Project bringing puppies for students to pet. Teams were given 4 hours to design a winning square of sidewalk. When they were not drawing, students could donate money on CrowdChange to The Mercy Full Project, a nonprofit animal rescue, to have time in the puppy pens with several puppies. Each team produced elaborate pieces of sidewalk chalk art, but in the end, volunteers from The Mercy Full Project and another judge ranked Team One Direction in third, Team Queen in second, and Team AC/DC first.

Greek Olympics



Photos courtesy of Lexi Smith and Alicia Posthke

The fourth Greek Week event this week was the Greek Olympics, consisting of bracket style face off for 6 person Tag Team Relay Race and Tug of War. Members of each Greek organization showed up to participate or cheer on their team. Team One Direction and Team Black Eyed Peas tied for first in the Tag Team Relay Race, while Team NSYNC won first for Tug of War.

Bubble Soccer



Photo courtesy of Lexi Smith

The fifth Greek Week event this week was Bubble Soccer. A 5 v. 5 bracket style face off, teams compete to score as many goals as possible before the timer goes out. During the first round of brackets, 8 minutes were given. In the second round of brackets, 4 minutes were given to the teams. During the final face off, Team Black Eyed Peas and Team Maroon 5 faced off. With no goals scored in almost 20 minutes, the game was called and both teams tied for first.

GREEK WEEK

UTampa Mock Trial Team Breaks School Records

By Marissa Johnson

The University of Tampa's (UTampa) mock trial "B" team traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina, Feb. 13-15 to compete in an American Mock Trial Association (AMTA) regional competition. Overall, they won more ballots than any B team in school history.

The team arrived in Charlotte on Friday, Feb. 13, to finish last-minute preparations and ensure all of their supplies and documents were in order. Having scrimmaged against mock trial teams from Florida Gulf Coast University and Florida International University the previous weekend, and having participated in several in-house scrimmages during the week in between, the team was feeling prepared and ready for the competition.

Opening ceremonies for the competition began at 8:15 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14, with round one of the competition directly following. Round one saw UTampa's prosecution team facing Davidson College's defense. Later the same day, in round two, UTampa's defense team faced Elon University's prosecution.

Both round 1 and round 2 went well for UTampa, and the team "celebrated" that night by practicing their material again. The B team was feeling encouraged going into the second day of competition.

On Sunday, round three commenced, with UTampa's defense going against Patrick Henry College's prosecution at 8 a.m. That afternoon, UTampa's prosecution faced Wake Forest University's defense in the competition's final round.

Over the course of the four rounds, the team won a total of three ballots. At the closing awards ceremony, two members won awards.

The first was Magdalena "Maggie" Blatchely, a sophomore double major in international business and marketing, who won for her outstanding performance playing the expert witness role of Dr. Atlas Hartley. She won a total of 16 ranks as a prosecution witness while doubling as an attorney on defense.

"My favorite part was being able to bond with my team, and being able to practice skills that apply in the real world, like public speaking," said Blatchely. "I'm excited to be able to represent our school all the way up in North Carolina."

Trinity Smith, a freshman forensic science major and B team co-captain, said about Blatchely's performance, "I'm really proud of her. Over the past couple of months, I've really seen her put in a lot of work and a lot of dedication, especially outside of when we planned to practice."

Smith, also a defense attorney and prosecution witness, explained that Blatchely is "very deserving of this," and that Smith believes "this [sets] a good example for future members."

"My favorite part about regionals was getting to come out here and spend time with my amazing teammates," Smith continued. "I feel like we were able to bond, and really reflect the amount of practice we put in, prior to the competition." She added that she was excited for future competitions as well.

The second UTampa award recipient was Julian Provenzano, a junior criminal justice major, who was awarded for his outstanding job as a prosecution attorney. He won a total of 18 ranks.

In speaking about Provenzano's performance, Stefano Marcantoni, junior criminology major and defense attorney, said, "I am so proud of Julian. He put in countless hours of hard work and dedication, and he was rewarded for it. He deserved every rank he got."

Marcantoni also said it was his first competition, giving a "closing [statement] for the defense, or just [a closing statement] in general," and that "it definitely allowed [him] to jump way out of [his] comfort zone." Overall, he said, "I'm really happy with how it all turned out."

Luca Weik, senior philosophy major, won a total of 15 ranks playing the expert witness and psychologist Dr. Micah Lin, only one rank away from winning an outstanding witness award.

Weik stated that he's "been in mock trial ever since [he] came to UTampa, and [he had] never been so happy to see how far B team's come" in that time.

Lauren Rosell, a sophomore business management major, acted as both a defense witness and a prosecution attorney. Of Weik's performance, she said, "watching him play Dr. Lin was absolutely one of the highlights of the weekend. He's so charismatic and truly the perfect witness; he completely adopts whatever character he's playing as his own, and it's beautiful to watch."

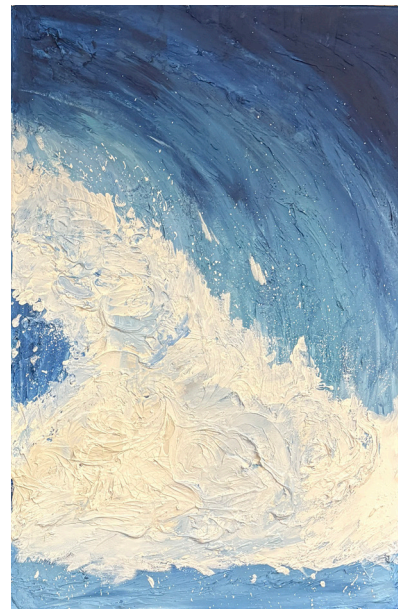
Rosell added that the B team "had a lot of fun," and that the competition encouraged "a lot of great team bonding."

After the competition, stand-in coach Anthony Dietrich, junior communications and speech major, talked about how much the team had grown. "I'm the president of mock trial, and captain of the A team," he said. "I'm so proud to have coached [B team]. I'm so proud of them."

Just before winning his award, Provenzano remarked that the mock trial case's make-believe defendant Charlie Martin "was definitely guilty of murder."

"So guilty," Dietrich agreed. UTampa's A and C mock trial teams will travel to Tallahassee Feb. 21-22 to compete in their regional competition.

UTampa mock trial B team at AMTA's Charlotte regional. Photo courtesy of Luca Weik.



President's Leadership Fellows Raised Over \$500 in Support of Project Prosper

On Feb. 19, President's Leadership Fellows (PLF), a leadership program at The University of Tampa, hosted a silent auction in support of Project Prosper, an organization that works to educate immigrants on the American financial system. PLF raised a total of \$571 during the silent auction, which showcased an array of photographs and paintings. Some of the pieces were donated by UTampa students and professional photographers, and local businesses also contributed to the auction with gift cards.

Photos courtesy of Franchesca Murrugarra



High Seas Treaty, Established by the United Nations, Seeks to Protect Marine Life in International Waters

By Federico Franco

Jan. 17, 2026, marks an important date for the protection of marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Last month, an agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), commonly known as the "High Seas Treaty," went into force after years of deliberation. Originally adopted by the UN General Assembly on June 19, 2023, it is now the third implementing agreement to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The agreement is a landmark global accord that seeks to protect marine life in the high seas and the deep seabed, which until now have been areas beyond any country's national jurisdiction. These open ocean areas are defined as international waters, and they begin beyond the established Maritime Limits of each nation. These limits are divided into three areas: territorial seas, which extend up to 12 nautical miles from the coastline, the contiguous zone, which covers up to 24 nautical miles from the coastline, and

an exclusive economic zone which goes up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. These measurements were defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and they established that areas beyond these 200 nautical miles are considered the aforementioned international waters, and as such, they remained unaffected by any country's marine or ecological protection laws. However, with the BBNJ agreement now set into force, this begins to change as a new precedent is established, which seeks to create a network to protect marine life and resources in these international waters.

This treaty applies to over two-thirds of the world's oceans, including the seabed and water column, and it seeks to provide a legal framework for the conservation of marine organisms, promoting sustainable use of marine resources, and creating a network between nations so that benefits and discoveries found from marine life can be shared by humanity as a whole. To achieve these goals, the BBNJ agreement focuses on four main issues, which were listed by the United Nations as such:

1. Marine genetic resources and benefit-sharing, ensuring discoveries from marine organisms benefit all humanity.

2. Area-based management tools, enabling the creation of marine protected areas



A photo of Tampa Bay. Photo courtesy of Federico Franco.

(MPAs) in international waters.

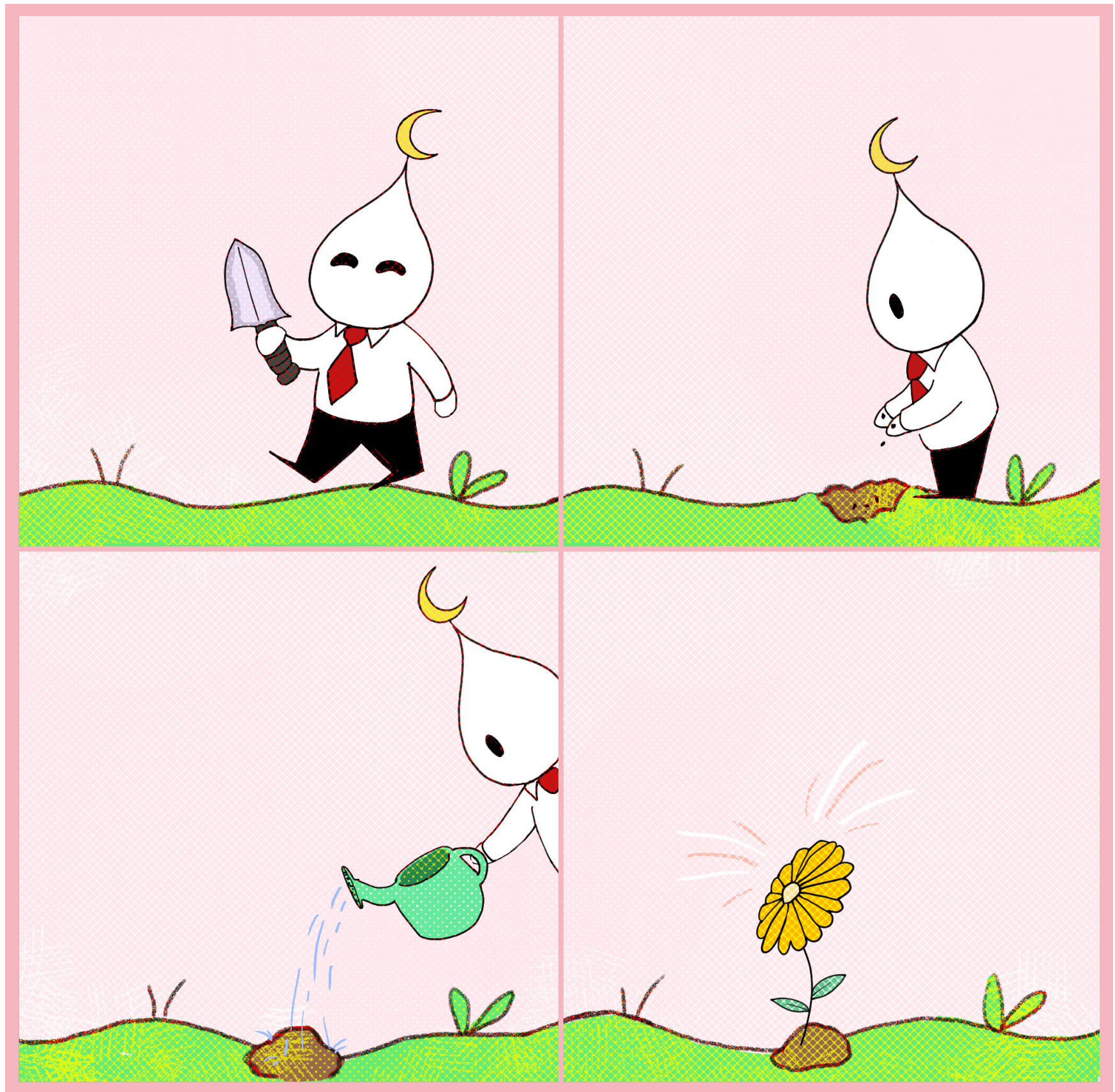
3. Environmental impact assessments require countries to evaluate how proposed activities could affect fragile marine ecosystems.

4. Capacity-building and technology transfers, helping developing countries participate fully in ocean research and conservation.

As part of the preparations to set the agreement into force, a temporary commission was created in 2025 to ensure the fair implementation of the High Seas Treaty. The commission met in April and

August of that same year, and is scheduled to meet again between March and April 2026 to continue discussions on governance, financing, and monitoring mechanisms for the nations that have signed and ratified the BBNJ agreement. As of Feb. 2026, the UN website shows 124 countries (including the U.S) have signed, and 85 have ratified the High Seas Treaty.

Blacktip Reef Shark off the Florida Keys. Photo courtesy of Federico Franco.



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BULLETIN BOARD

The Minaret

Join The Minaret, UTampa's student newspaper! Weekly meetings are on Mondays at 6:30 pm plus office hours in the Vaughn Center, 2nd floor, Room 211. These meetings are a chance to pitch article ideas, share updates, review upcoming deadlines, celebrate wins, and keep everyone on the same page as we work to put out the next edition of the newspaper. Follow us on Instagram (@theminaret) and email alyssa.cortes@spartans.ut.edu for more information. Everyone is welcome!

Graduate Admissions

Stay at UTampa for Grad School! With UTampa2UTampa, current students and alumni can seamlessly continue to earn a master's degree right here at UTampa. Learn more at our Graduate Open House: Thursday, April 16, 5:30 pm, Jenkins Skyview Room. No RSVP required!

Office of Graduate and Continuing Studies

May Term & Summer Sessions: Catch up, get ahead, or explore something new. Registration opened on Feb. 23. Courses are available in person and online. Register in Workday today. Learn more at UTampa.edu/summer or email gradinfo@ut.edu with questions.

Macdonald-Kelce Library

Come join the library for the Spring 2026 UTWrites lecture series! All events take place in the library room #203, AV2. Reading from his new book *Other Shane Hintons* with Shane Hinton, English & Writing, on Wednesday, March 11, at 4 pm.

Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry

The Office of Undergrad Research is accepting grant proposals for Undergrad Research & Inquiry Grants for the 2026/27 school year. Please go to <https://ouri.submittable.com/> submit by Friday, March 13th to apply. Contact ouri@ut.edu with any questions.

Student Productions

Looking for something fun to do? Check out our upcoming events on Instagram @utampasp or on Involve UT. From movie nights and craft events to bingo and our biggest event of the year, Party in the Park on March 6, there is something for everyone.

UTTV

UTampa TV: Student Television is in full swing this spring semester! Follow us on Instagram and YouTube @uttvspartannews and stay tuned for new content.

UTampa Law Review

Want to see your work published in an academic journal? Join Law Review on Wednesdays at 8:00 pm in Grand Center 151. Develop legal writing and research skills, strengthen your resume, and contribute to meaningful discussions on today's most pressing legal issues. The law affects us all—add your voice.

Moroccan Yearbook

Did you know UTampa had a yearbook? Come write, edit, and design with us for the fall and spring semester! Staff will also learn the fundamentals of written copy and generating photogenic content. All majors are encouraged, with internship credit available for writing majors! For information, contact the editor-in-chief at kamilyah.mcmiller@spartans.ut.edu

STAFF SHOUTOUTS!

Huge shout-out to our incredible copy editors who truly keep this newspaper running strong!

A special thank you to Ariana Fromm, our head copy editor, whose leadership, sharp eye, and steady guidance set the standard for excellence every single day. To Nick Mezzaucella, who joined us last year and continues to dedicate his time and talent even as he starts his graduate studies. And to Marissa-Bell Johnson and Alexis Damiano, who joined us this year and have already made such a tremendous impact; your hard work, attention to detail, and willingness to jump in wherever needed have been such a help. Thank you for catching the mistakes, polishing the stories, and making sure every edition is something we're proud to publish!

-Alyssa Cortes, Editor-in-Chief

WANT TO BE FEATURED?

The bulletin board page will be a recurring feature in every print moving forward, which is released biweekly. Reach out to alyssa.cortes@spartans.ut.edu with any other announcements, shout-outs, or updates you'd like to share! Message needs to be 50 words or less.

