

# TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*In the News*



**February 16, 2010 - March 25, 2011**



# TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## Top teachers to be honored tonight

David Adlerstein

Barbara Lee

For high school English literature teacher Barbara Lee, the art of instruction is the art of enabling students to challenge their assumptions and to think things through for themselves.

"Don't follow the crowd just because they're doing it," she advises. "Remember you're free to speak in this class what you think and feel."

As teacher of 11th grade American literature, and an Advanced Placement (AP) English course for juniors and seniors, Lee can use the works of great American writers, from Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson to Toni Morrison and Eudora Welty, to generate fresh thinking and analysis in her students.

"I ask them 'Where is your Walden? Where do you go to appreciate nature,'" she said. "I want them to feel comfortable expressing themselves. I ask them 'How does that (work) speak to you?'"

After graduating from Apalachicola High School in 1974, and then from [Tallahassee Community College](#) in 1976 with an associate's degree in education, Lee first went to work for Property Appraiser John James, and for the city of Apalachicola, before returning to college to finish her education at Florida State University.

In 1988 she earned a degree in early childhood and elementary education, and then Principal Rose McCoy hired her to help create the pre-Kindergarten program at Chapman Elementary School.

After eight years as an elementary school teacher, she became re-certified in English, and assumed a position teaching high school English at Apalachicola High School.

During the last 15 years, she's taught middle and high school English, and served as media specialist, as well as been active with extracurriculars, from coaching cheerleading, volleyball and track to serving as class sponsor.

She and husband John have two daughters, Kayla, who served in the U.S. Air Force and is now studying physical therapy in Montgomery, Ala., and Bryanne Rajamannar, who is married and living in Jacksonville with a 3-month-old daughter Sienna.

This is the first year Lee is teaching "a kid of a kid," after having had the boy's father in class when she began teaching 23 years ago. "I really do know these kids, I know their needs," she said. "I try to look at that child as an individual, their needs and interests and learning styles. I teach to that. You don't always know who 'gets it' and sometimes you're surprised who gets it."

Lee is especially proud of her AP students, most all of whom she is confident will succeed in college if that's the path they take.

"I think they're all going to make it; they're all capable," she said. "I don't want to be bored when I teach and AP offers all different strategies. It's like a puzzle."

To underscore how literature and philosophy are puzzles to be sorted out, Lee turns to actual wooden puzzles, similar to Rubik's cubes, to afford students a hands-on opportunity to find fresh ways to get around figurative doors and walls in their minds.

"I have to find different ways to approach the subject, different activities, even role playing" she said. "They kind of feel that they're a part of it. You can't just say 'Read it and give me back the information.'"

## Health-care industry helping to cure job ills

**BETH KIRKLAND**

GUEST COLUMNIST

Our community looks to the health-care industry for help in curing many ailments, but this year it is also providing help with a problem affecting 8.3 percent of our population.

In 2010, health-care providers were a leading driver for new jobs in Leon and surrounding counties, and 2011 looks even more promising.

The Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County has been focused on health care for years as a targeted industry sector, painted with the broader brush of health sciences and human performance enhancement.

To stay connected to this vital field, the EDC has an active, industry-led roundtable providing a forum for business leaders from the public and private sectors to design and implement specific initiatives that promote high-wage job retention and expansion.

Employment in health care continues to rise. If you faint at the sight of blood, but are willing to tackle financial disasters, there are positions in administrative support, financial management, customer service and medical coding, as well as many jobs in support of the industry's rapidly increasing use of technology.

To make sure there will be a highly trained workforce to not only handle newly created jobs but the attrition of an aging workforce, the EDC is working with the Ghazvini Center for Health Care Education at [Tallahassee Community College](#), Florida State University, Florida A&M University, Keiser University and Lively Technical Center to develop training programs and help funnel qualified applicants through Workforce Plus to the area's health-care providers.

What makes the need for a homegrown health-care workforce even more important here is that Tallahassee

serves as an "urban island" providing health care to a 23-county area. To better meet growing needs, many of our larger providers are opening new facilities and satellite offices throughout the region.

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare just opened its Cancer Center, home to all of its outpatient clinical cancer services; the Weems Medical Center East in Franklin County, a \$1.2 million, 5,000-square-foot facility in Carrabelle; the Tallahassee Medical Specialists facility in SouthWood; and is finishing construction on the 17,000-square-foot Red Hills Surgery Center.

Capital Health Plan, recently ranked the No. 1 health plan in the country, is expanding coverage in 2011 to residents of Calhoun and Liberty counties.

Capital Regional Medical Center opened the Gadsden Memorial Campus last year, the first emergency room in the county since 2005.

North Florida Women's Care recently hired two graduates of the FSU College of Medicine, who came back to practice in our community after completing their residencies. Their arrival allowed for expanding services to a satellite clinic in Perry and soon, a clinic at the Weems Center in Carrabelle.

The EDC is working directly with Workforce Plus to encourage applicants to get their resumes posted at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) and to participate in the agency's "In The Spotlight: Healthcare," a recruitment event Feb. 24 that allows job seekers to showcase their qualifications to multiple health-care employers. For details, call 1-866-WFP-JOB1 or visit [www.wfplus.org](http://www.wfplus.org).

Beth Kirkland is executive director of the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County.

## Campus Notes

### TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

#### FPSI to host breakfast for Black History

TCC's Florida Public Safety Institute will host its fourth annual Black History Month breakfast Tuesday at the FPSI Conference Center in Midway. A meet-and-greet session begins at 8 a.m. followed by breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and the program at 9 a.m. The theme for this year's event is My Inspiration ... The Drive Behind My Success. Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll and Tallahassee Mayor John Marks will be the keynote speakers. The event is open to the public. To make reservations, e-mail [ptlea@tcc.fl.edu](mailto:ptlea@tcc.fl.edu). For more information, contact Kim Allen at (850) 201-7069.

College names new distance learning director: Marilyn Dickey is the new director of distance learning at TCC. The newly created position was designed to help TCC's distance learning program better meet the growing demand for classes to be offered in non-traditional mediums, most notably the flexibility to take classes or earn a degree from home. Dickey comes to TCC from Renaissance Educational Consulting Services, where she was CEO. Her previous experience also includes 11 years as director of instructional and information technology at Florida A&M University, where she also served as a faculty member in the School of Nursing.

Preview event tonight: The college is hosting a Preview TCC event from 6 to 8 p.m today. The preview will give people an opportunity to meet with TCC representatives and learn about the application process, financial aid, scholarships, campus life and the college's degree, certificate and workforce training programs. The event will take place in TCC's Student Union Ballroom. Local high school students and their parents, people interested in continuing their education and anyone wanting to learn more about opportunities at TCC are encouraged to attend. Reservations are not required.

## WCTV - February 22, 2011

## TCC Opens New Veterans Center

REPORTER: TCC RELEASE

[Tallahassee Community College](#) anticipates a significant increase in the number of veterans on its campus in the coming years and has opened a new Veterans Center to help them transition to academic life and make sure they receive the benefits they are owed.

Located on the second floor of TCC's Student Union, the Veterans Center's mission is to assist veterans and reservists—along with their family members and survivors—in obtaining all federal educational benefits and entitlements they have earned by serving in the United States military. The Veterans Center also provides professional guidance and support services that will aid veterans in their transition to academic and civilian life.

Additionally, the Center offers a quiet, convenient place for veterans to study, use a computer or network with other veterans.

"We look forward to welcoming veterans to the College and showing them how proud we are to have them as a part of the TCC family," said Delorise Robinson, veteran affairs coordinator at TCC.

The Veterans Center is already open and helping TCC's veterans, but an official ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for March to celebrate its new location.

## TCC Gospel Extravaganza

Reporter: TCC Release

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (February 23, 2011) -- Tallahassee Community College's celebration of Black History Month concludes on Thursday, February 24 with the popular Gospel Extravaganza and Soul Food Festival.

The event will take place in the Student Union Ballroom.

The Gospel Extravaganza and Soul Food Festival, a showcase of local gospel choirs and entertainers, begins with a 6 p.m. reception followed by entertainment at 7 p.m.

The event is free and open to the public.

WCTV - February 23, 2011

## TCC Launches Blog and Facebook Page for President Jim Murdaugh

REPORTER: TCC RELEASE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (February 23, 2011) -

Today marks another first for Tallahassee Community College. The Office of the President, in conjunction with the Office of Communications and Public Information, has launched the very first President's Blog, as well as a Facebook Page for Dr. Jim Murdaugh, TCC's sixth president.

These new social media platforms will work together to provide a new and dynamic means of communication with TCC students, faculty and staff, as well as the Tallahassee community.

The blog will focus on the president's commitment to student success at TCC and his action plan for taking it from "good to great." Posts will speak primarily to

TCC students, faculty and staff and will share Jim's personal philosophies, encounters, conversations and achievements as president of the College. Readers will also find his 90-day report and additional blog posts will feature events the president is planning and activities happening around campus and the community.

The Facebook Page will highlight these campus events and achievements as well, communicating with both the TCC community and the Tallahassee community with links, pictures, events, discussions and more.

Both of these mediums will offer an exciting new look into the Office of the President and life at TCC.

To follow Jim, visit his blog at [blog.tcc.fl.edu](http://blog.tcc.fl.edu) or 'like' his page on Facebook.com.

## TCC launches blog and Facebook page for President Jim Murdaugh

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## Tallahassee Democrat - February 24, 2011

### TCC's veterans get a new center

BY DOUG BLACKBURN  
DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

Norman Gallon has a new favorite place at [Tallahassee Community College](#) — the veterans center.

Gallon, 35, is a former Army sergeant working on a degree in recreation technology. He's used to meeting with Delorise Robinson, the college's veterans affairs specialist, but now Robinson has her own space on the second floor of the student union. It features three computer stations and a mini-library with paperwork pertinent to veterans.

"I love it. It's just showing veterans some respect," Gallon said Wednesday. "It's real convenient."

The veterans center at TCC is so new — it opened at the end of January — that the college has yet to hold an official grand opening. TCC received a \$125,000 Texas Guaranty grant to build and furnish the center.

There are more than 550 veterans at TCC using either the

GI Bill or its post-9/11 counterpart, the Montgomery GI Bill, to help cover the costs of their education.

"The veterans are really enjoying the center because it takes them out of the financial aid lines," Robinson said. "They enjoy the atmosphere. They're able to socialize with other veterans who are here."

Jim Murdaugh, TCC's president, was in the Air Force Reserves as a Florida State University student. He's proud to offer a separate space dedicated to veterans.

"I think the significance of what we're doing is respecting the contributions these men and women have made to our country and opening the doors to education for them as they transition back to civilian life," Murdaugh said. "I believe it's our obligation to help them make that transition."

## Allison DeFoor and Colleen Castille join The Fiorentino Group

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.--(EON: Enhanced Online News)--Two of Florida's top public policy leaders -- Allison DeFoor and Colleen Castille -- have joined The Fiorentino Group ("TFG"), a full-service government relations and business development firm with offices in Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Tampa.

"Their years of experience at the highest levels of government will be a tremendous asset to our firm and our clients."

Both Castille and DeFoor have served leadership roles at the highest levels in Florida state government, the judiciary, law enforcement, environmental protection and on numerous boards.

"Allison and Colleen have long and distinguished careers in public service," said Marty Fiorentino, founding partner of TFG. "Their years of experience at the highest levels of government will be a tremendous asset to our firm and our clients."

"Since opening its doors in 2002, The Fiorentino Group has grown rapidly because of its reputation for integrity and high quality, results-oriented representation," said Castille, who served as both Secretary of Environmental Protection and Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs under Governor Jeb Bush. "We look forward to working with Marty and his team and being a part of the next decade of growth at TFG. This alliance will add increased value to our clients' efforts to influence public policy and navigate the halls of government."

DeFoor, who served as Sheriff and Circuit Court Judge in Monroe County, and "Everglades Czar" in the administration of Governor Jeb Bush, added: "We're very excited about the synergies our backgrounds and expertise bring to TFG. We believe an integrated

approach to government relations issues, incorporating community and public relations with lobbying and advocacy creates superior results. We share their vision of doing well by doing good."

Colleen Castille served as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection under Governor Jeb Bush from 2004-2007 and Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs from January of 2003 to February of 2004. She also served as Chief Cabinet Aide to Governor Bush and Commissioner of Education Frank Brogan and Senior Cabinet Aide to Insurance Commissioner and Treasurer Tom Gallagher. She currently serves on the boards of The Leroy Collins Public Policy Institute and LeMoyne Center for the Visual Arts.

Allison DeFoor II is a seventh-generation Floridian. He is a former county and circuit judge, Sheriff of Monroe County and Republican nominee for Lieutenant Governor in 1990, as running mate to Governor Bob Martinez.

From 2002-2006 he served as Vice Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida. He serves on the Board of Governors of the Florida Chamber of Commerce and is on the Board of Directors of Florida TaxWatch and Associated Industries of Florida. He is a Trustee of [Tallahassee Community College](#) and is an ordained Episcopal priest engaged in prison ministry.

Founded in 2000, The Fiorentino Group has offices in Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Tampa Bay, and represents a wide range of clients, including insurance, transportation, telecommunications, real estate development, health care, local governments and non-profits. The firm's principals have more than 50 years of combined experience in local, state and national governmental affairs with contacts across the country.

## Big Bend briefs

TCC renames gym for Hebrock

Tallahassee Community College has renamed its gymnasium the Bill Hebrock Eagledome in honor of the late member of the college's Board of Trustees. Hebrock, who died Jan. 4, had served on TCC's board representing Leon County since 1999 and chaired the board in 2001-02. "Bill Hebrock loved Tallahassee Community College and he had a special affinity toward athletics," TCC President Jim Murdaugh said. "I can think of no better way to show our appreciation for Mr. Hebrock than to put his name on one of our athletic facilities."

## The FAMUAN - February 25, 2011

### Residents to Enhance City through New Initiative

BY TALETA POSTON

STAFF WRITER, THE FAMUAN

Residents gathered Tuesday night at the Challenger Learning Center Planetarium as city leaders launched the Tallahassee Town and Gown (TAG) relations project.

The informational meeting was the first of a series of forums the organization will host as part of its goal of "turning Tallahassee into an even better place to live and work."

The project, funded by Florida State, Florida A&M, Tallahassee Community College, the City of Tallahassee and Leon County among other businesses and organizations, began the first phase of its four-step process to a better Tallahassee in July 2010 by conducting research on community issues and developing and proctoring surveys to both city residents and leaders.

The surveys focused on obtaining an accurate perception and understanding of each group's perceived issues the city faces and could improve on.

The four phases of the initiative include surveying residents and leaders, conducting a series of forums to present and discuss the data of surveys, developing a process and selecting and implementing projects based on what was learned.

"Right now we need to look at where are we and where are we going," project director Mike Pate said.

"Our timing couldn't be better because now is the perfect time and place to be talking about these issues so that we can begin having these conversations before we get to a point where things turn together and we forget how difficult it was during this time period."

During the forum, Pate discussed the results of the surveys, which were conducted in October 2010.

According to the results, community residents and leaders were mainly concerned with economic development partnerships, public safety issues and using university research to create jobs and new businesses.

There was also an expressed concern of university and student involvement within the community by several residents who attended the forum.

Pate said he was confident that the presidents of the higher education institutions were open to becoming more engaged with the community and planned to be more than just financially supportive to TAG.

"We are looking forward to partnering with local businesses, governmental entities and neighboring institutions through this 'Town and Gown' initiative," FAMU President James Ammons said in a recent statement.

"I believe that from the well-established relationships that we have built over the years, we can collaborate on economic initiatives and help provide a more enriching environment for all of our citizens. I'm pleased that FAMU is able to help support the effort."

Sharon P. Saunders, chief communications Officer at FAMU and member of the TAG Advisory Board, is also confident that FAMU's faculty and students will become actively involved with the TAG initiative to create a better Tallahassee.

## Residents to Enhance City through New Initiative...

*continued*

Saunders recognizes that many FAMU students are not aware of the initiative and has begun taking steps to increase student awareness and participation with the program.

"Through the 'Town and Gown' (TAG) initiative, we are exploring ways that FAMU can collaborate on a number of projects, including how students and the community can engage in ways that are mutually beneficial," Saunders said.

"We are in the early stages of developing the program and will reach out to students and the larger community to share a comprehensive plan. We believe that TAG is needed and can only serve to make Tallahassee a better place to live."

Pate estimated that the project's duration will be about two years and urged involvement from all residing in Tallahassee.

He also encouraged attendees to visit the project's website and the official Facebook page for the group, TAG Tallahassee, to remain current on TAG discussions and events.

## Tallahassee Democrat - February 27, 2011

### Community briefs

TCC to host Student Success Summit: [Tallahassee Community College](#) president Jim Murdaugh's first 90 days in office is culminating in the College's first-ever Student Success Summit, which will take place March 3-4. The two-day event will bring together the College's many stakeholders, all with the goal of helping TCC further determine what is needed to help students succeed. The Summit will open at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 3 with an open invitation to the reception to be held in the lobby of the College's Fine and Performing Arts Center. At 6:30 p.m., attendees will move into adjoining Turner Auditorium for President Murdaugh's welcome, followed by the opening keynote, to be delivered by Dr. Sandy Shugart, president of Valencia College. Events on Friday, March 4 are by invitation only.

## Wooten, Jenkins served US military proudly

### DEMOCRAT STAFF REPORT

One man served in World War I. The other was a member of the Tuskegee Airmen who rose to the rank of Army colonel.

Both the late Pfc. Clenton Wooten Sr. and the late Col. Willie Jenkins served proudly in the United States armed forces. And both are featured in the 2011 Cherry Hall Alexander African-American History Calendar, representing the services of all American veterans.

Jenkins, who died March 30, at age 85, began his military career as an Army private in the Tuskegee Airmen, the nation's first black military airmen, according to the calendar's information. He eventually became a staff sergeant in charge of parachute operations. He fought in World War II and served as a company commander in the Korean War.

Jenkins was invited by President George W. Bush in 2007 to attend a ceremony awarding the Tuskegee Airmen the Congressional Gold Medal, and he also had been awarded the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit Award. He earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia State University and a master's degree from Florida A&M University, serving as FAMU's dean of development and also serving on the [Tallahassee Community College](#) board of trustees.

Wooten, a lifelong Jefferson County resident, was born in 1894 and served his World War I tour of duty in Brest, France, under Gen. John J. Pershing, according to the calendar's information. He returned to Jefferson County following his military service, purchased a farm and owned 150 acres of land when he died in 1999 at the age of 104.

Wooten's four sons also served in the U.S. military. Clenton Wooten Jr. and Dilworth Wooten served in World War II, while Daniel Wooten and Isaac Wooten served in the Korean War.

## Campus Notes

### TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Student Success Summit coming Thursday and Friday: President Jim Murdaugh's first 90 days in office is culminating with the college's first Student Success Summit, which will take place Thursday and Friday. The invitation-only two-day event will bring together the college's many stakeholders, all with the goal of helping TCC further determine what is needed to help students succeed. In recent weeks, Murdaugh hosted student success conversations with TCC students, faculty and classified staff. During each event, individuals had the opportunity to give feedback on various topics from preparation before college to experience in college and job readiness after graduation.

Student named to state all-academic team: Sarah Mesterton-Gibbons, a dual-enrolled home-school student on track to earn her high school diploma in May, has been named to the 2011 Phi Theta Kappa All-Florida Academic Team. This year's team consists of 108 students representing Florida's state, community and junior colleges and one independent university. A native of Tallahassee, Mesterton-Gibbons maintains a 4.0 GPA and volunteers with the Gadsden Music House.

### WCTV - March 1, 2011

## TCC to Host Student Success Summit March 3-4

REPORTER: TCC RELEASE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 1, 2011) – [Tallahassee Community College](#) will host its first-ever Student Success Summit on Thursday and Friday, March 3 and 4.

The two-day event, which will take place in different campus venues, will bring together the College's many stakeholders, all with the goal of helping TCC further determine what is needed to help students succeed.

"[Tallahassee Community College](#) prides itself on student success," said TCC President Jim Murdaugh. "I feel like we (TCC) are performing well in the (student success) area.

"However, my aim is for TCC to move student success from good to great."

The Summit will open at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 3 with a reception in the lobby of the College's Fine and Performing Arts Center. At 6:30 p.m., attendees will move into adjoining Turner Auditorium for President Murdaugh's welcome, followed by the opening keynote, to be delivered by Dr. Sandy Shugart, president of Valencia Community College.

Day two of the summit is by invitation only and commences at 7:45 a.m., Friday, March 4 with breakfast in TCC's Center for Workforce Development.

At 8:45 a.m., Dr. Shugart will present "Remaking the Movement: The Challenge and Opportunity of the National Dialog on Community College Completion" in response to President Barack Obama's American Graduation Initiative, which seeks to help an additional five million Americans earn degrees and certificates in the next ten years.

Later in the day, attendees will hear the Florida Department of Education's response to the graduation initiative, as well as input from a community panel on the importance of TCC responding to this call as it relates to its own community and economic development.

Summit participants will then identify strategies for TCC to meet the national and state goals.

The Summit's closing session will begin at 12:15 p.m. and includes the signing of TCC's Call to Action Commitment.

## TCC staging 'Student Success Summit'

BY DOUG BLACKBURN  
DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

Kionna Ellis applauds what Jim Murdaugh is doing at [Tallahassee Community College](#).

Ellis, a second-year student from Hollywood hoping to transfer to Florida A&M, says TCC's new president is actively seeking student input.

"He's trying to reach out to students and better serve them," the student body president said. "He's taking three steps forward as far as meeting us more than halfway."

Murdaugh, closing in on his first 90 days as TCC's president, is holding a two-day "Student Success Summit" starting Thursday evening. It includes two talks by Sandy Shugart, president of Valencia College, and breakout sessions featuring students and many of TCC's external constituents.

"We do a lot of things very well, but I recognize there are some opportunities to do even better," Murdaugh said. "We need to make sure we're communicating well."

Ellis urges TCC to focus on how well its staff is advising students eager to matriculate to a four-year school for a bachelor's degree. Some of her classmates have discovered they needed to take an additional class to successfully transfer.

"I'm sure other students have told (Murdaugh) about this," she said.

Friday's panel discussions will include members of the chamber of commerce and Kimberly Moore, CEO of Workforce Plus.

"We want to make sure we're in synch with our external partners and providing credentials for employment, whether it's degrees or certificates," Murdaugh said.

There's no timetable for convening a second student summit, but Murdaugh vows this week's isn't the last one he will hold.

"It's not designed to make us all feel good," he said. "It's designed to make sure we know how we're doing business."

## Update: Meggs says cost shouldn't be a factor when arguing death penalty

By Bill Cotterell

FLORIDA CAPITAL BUREAU

State Attorney Willie Meggs, preparing for a death-penalty sentencing in a grisly Big Bend case, today disputed state Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda's argument that belt-tightening legislators could save millions by ending capital punishment in Florida.

The second-term Tallahassee Democrat has introduced a bill abolishing the death penalty. She conceded it has virtually no chance of passing in the Republican-run Legislature, but she is morally opposed to execution and believes the current budget climate provides a good time for the discussion.

The state faces a \$3.6 billion revenue shortage and Gov. Rick Scott has proposed \$5 billion in state spending cuts in his budget recommendations for the legislative session starting next Tuesday.

"I don't think cost is a factor we should look at, when we decide to seek the death penalty or not to seek it," said Meggs. "It is reserved for the worst of the worst, and we carefully consider all the facts before seeking the death penalty."

Serial killer Gary Michael Hilton was convicted last month of kidnapping and murdering a Wakulla County woman, Cheryl Dunlap, cutting off her head and hands. He had been previously convicted and given a life sentence in a Georgia case, and the Leon County jury recommended a death sentence in the Dunlap murder.

Meggs office is preparing for sentencing hearings by Circuit Judge James Hankinson. Hankinson can substitute life in prison without parole – which would be the maximum sentence if Rehwinkel Vasilinda's bill were already law.

"We send people to prison today for life without parole -- we'll send a 23-year-old man to prison for life for committing an armed robbery with a firearm. Shouldn't there be a distinction between the person who commits armed robbery with a firearm and a person who murders four people, a serial killer?"

Rehwinkel Vasilinda, a lawyer who teaches law at [Tallahassee Community College](#), said the death penalty has not been imposed or carried out fairly. Even if it were, she said, "this is just not something the state should be doing."

She denied that her bill is a "lost cause," saying that many ideas are given now chance when introduced but gain strength over several sessions. She said she would like to get a discussion started on capital punishment and its alternatives.

First report

State Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda wants to abolish Florida's death penalty.

ADVERTISEMENT

She knows her bill won't pass. But the second-term Democrat, a lawyer who teaches law at [Tallahassee Community College](#), thinks a cost-benefit discussion of capital punishment would be timely and useful. She is morally opposed to capital punishment personally, and believes it doesn't work legally, but she said support for executions might be eroding in these tough budget times.

Also, she said in an interview Tuesday night, a company that makes one of the lethal drugs used in the state's lethal-injection "cocktail" has recently stopped making it. Pressure on drug companies by countries that don't have capital punishment may eventually cause states to run out of the materials, she said.

"I thought this was something that needs to be repealed for a number of reasons," she said. "If we're interested in cutting budgets and costs, it seems to me that the death penalty is much more expensive than life in prison without possibility of parole."

Florida law provides death for first-degree murder when juries find aggravating circumstances to outweigh any mitigating factors. If courts impose life, it is without parole.

"I'm just not sure this is something the government should be doing," said Rehwinkel Vasilinda. "The death penalty has not been applied fairly over the years."

She acknowledged that there is no chance the Republican-run Legislature will pass her bill or that Gov. Rick Scott would sign it into law. But she said, as a member of the minority party, it is part of her job to advocate lost causes and get discussions going on alternatives.

She has sponsored other hopeless measures in her two years in the House, such as extending the sales tax to Internet sales and taxing bottled water.

"Sometimes, I do bills that I think aren't going to pass," she said. "I'll put things in my legislative platform that I think are just in need of getting a conversation going."

## Scott's rocky relationship with lawmakers

Reported by: Jerry Hume

EMAIL: JHUME@WTXL.TV

It's a rocky start to Republican Governor Rick Scott's relationship with the Florida legislature. The health care executive turned first time politician has angered lawmakers with some of his policy decisions.

"He is not the CEO of Florida in the context of a corporation," said Sen. Arthenia Joyner (D-Tampa). "There are 2 other people in the game, the legislature and the judicial branches."

A Republican and Democratic senator on Tuesday filed suit against Scott, saying he didn't have the authority to reject federal money for high speed rail.

Last month the Senate's Republican budget chief said Scott failed to follow the law when he sold the states two airplanes.

And Gov. Scott's efforts to shutdown a database to track the abuse of painkillers and other prescription drugs has him at odds with the Senate President.

"Governor, he has every right to have his opinion, and I respect that," said Sen. Pres. Mike Haridopolos (R-Merritt Island). "My opinion is strong, we will get this funded."

All of this debate and session hasn't even started. The new governor's fresh approach to politics is not sitting well with some Republican and Democratic lawmakers.

"I think it's very easy to look at Governor Scott's political inexperience and showing he's operating in the same modus operandi that he worked on as a CEO," said Tallahassee Community College Professor Richard Murgo, "he's operating very unilaterally in that regard."

But some say these disputes are actually good for the system

"This is healthy, and I think collegial bodies, three separate equal branches of government, that's the way the system was intended to operate," said Sen. Thad Altman (R-Viera).

## Gadsden YouthBuild project receives national \$1 million grant

TALLAHASSEE, Fla - A local organization that helps young adults with training in the construction field and education is getting a huge boost to their budget.

Organizers say the U.S. Department of Labor has awarded more than \$1 million in grant money to the Gadsden YouthBuild project.

Officials say the grant money will go towards the construction of a single-family home that will include the use of "green" technology, like solar thermal hot water heating and a programmable thermostat.

Organizers say at least 60 youth will be able to participate over two periods of time.

To qualify for the program they must be a part of what the organization calls the disadvantaged youth population and be between 16 and 24 years old.

Youthbuild is a joint project between Workforce plus, Tallahassee Community College, City of Midway and other organizations.

## Memo to vendors: Agencies still have purchases to make

BY DAVE HODGES

DEMOCRAT BUSINESS EDITOR

Even with tight budgets and the prospect of reduced spending by government, Keith Roberts, Leon County's purchasing director, said he has basic must-have items on his shopping list.

"We still have to fill the potholes. We have to pave the roads," he said. This past year was noteworthy because of the county's construction of branch libraries. "That was a big push this year."

He and other purchasing officials at Tuesday's annual Reverse Trade Show agreed that prospective vendors should proceed with registering themselves with government departments and indicate which products or services they can provide.

The trade show at the Civic Center is a project of the Tallahassee Area Chapter of the National Institute of Government Purchasing. Instead of vendors having booths, however, it was 26 different government buyers who had displays and were eager to meet with companies interested in providing goods and services.

A good place to start is MyFloridaMarketplace.com, the state of Florida's website designed to connect prospective vendors with executive departments and other agencies. It provides increased access to those who make government purchases, especially for small businesses, minority, disabled veteran and woman-owned firms.

Since MyFloridaMarketplace was activated in July 2003, state and participating local governments have spent \$9.4 billion through the system, according to the Department of Management Services. A total of \$1 billion is awarded annually in purchases through 62 state term contracts and 17 state purchasing agreements negotiated by the DMS Division of State Purchasing.

All agencies can make purchases under the state term contracts, including local governments.

Lyle Hackett, the DMS bureau chief responsible for technology, office equipment and support services procurement, recommends that firms register at the website, then pick the commodity codes for the items they can supply. When that particular product is needed, they will be notified.

And for local suppliers, Leon County Schools is among those buyers that have made a renewed commitment to seek out vendors in this area. Dexter Martin, the school district's small business enterprise director, says that emphasis is coming from Superintendent Jackie Pons.

"We want to have economic growth in this area and put more money back into those small businesses," Martin said. "We work with a lot of businesses and want to keep it local as much as possible."

Morgan Maclean, government sales executive and trainer for the firm Copyfax 2000, attended the show with colleagues Gary Cole and Mike Booker. She noted that improved technology, plus aggressive pricing by Konica Minolta, their equipment source, means "buyers are getting more for their money." That is reflected in the reduced cost per page copied, and in lower equipment leasing costs.

"Money is tight, but you are looking for ways you can save," Cole said of their clients.

Bobby Hinson, purchasing manager at Tallahassee Community College, said the college's level of expenditures is holding steady, and that bidding opportunities for suppliers are posted online at [www.tcc.fl.edu](http://www.tcc.fl.edu). TCC also buys goods and services under statewide contracts the state has. There's an application package that can be downloaded and filled out, which gets a vendor into TCC's procurement system.

"Obviously, we are in a challenging environment," said Rick Rome, whose company, Lightspeed, produces and distributes classroom audio systems. School districts and other purchasers are looking for products and services that make their personnel more productive and help solve problems — in his case, how a teacher can speak in a normal tone of voice and still be clearly heard in a busy classroom.

"And of course, you work hard to take care of your customer because if you don't, somebody else will," said Booker of Copyfax 2000.

## Jim Murdaugh: Student summit will help make TCC even greater

### Sub-head

**Jim Murdaugh**

MY VIEW

In my first 90 days as [Tallahassee Community College's](#) president, I had the great pleasure of hosting conversations with students, faculty, staff and community partners.

We talked about our students' preparation before arriving at TCC, about their experience while here and about their readiness for further education and careers after they leave us.

I'm happy to say the feedback has been positive — and our commitment is to continuously examine each and every opportunity for the college to help students succeed. My report to the board of trustees and other information can be found online on my Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/jimmurdaugh](http://www.facebook.com/jimmurdaugh).

Students choose TCC for a variety of reasons. Some choose us for our small class sizes and commitment to quality teaching. Others choose us for our strong transfer program linkages with Florida State and Florida A&M. Some choose us to earn the credentials to get jobs in our community, and others choose us for the value we provide them for their tuition dollars.

Regardless of why students choose to come to TCC, they count on us to make sure the degrees and credentials they earn have value.

So we must ensure that our degree and credential programs, out-of-class support, financial assistance and other college activities are meeting the needs of our students.

That's why we're hosting our first Student Success Summit on Thursday, with a goal of bringing the college's many stakeholders together to discover ways to continue efforts that work and find additional opportunities to foster student achievement. That means successful transfer to a college or university, or successful transition to a job or career.

We know our students' success means improving the livelihood of their families, the prosperity of our communities and the future of our state's economy. With more than a million Floridians out of work, it's more incumbent upon us than ever to ensure that each one of our students succeeds. Here's where TCC is now: We have The Learning Commons, a truly extraordinary academic support center that opened in 2008 and is achieving remarkable results.



We have partnered with five private universities — Barry, Flagler, Embry-Riddle, Saint Leo and Thomas — that offer degrees on our campus.

We have branches in Gadsden and Wakulla counties and in downtown Tallahassee.

Last year, we opened the Advanced Manufacturing Training Center to meet workers' needs for high-paying jobs and employers' needs for high-skilled workers.

We just opened a Veterans Center to support those who have served in the military and to prepare for an expected spike in student veterans.

We're nearly done with the Ghazvini Center for Health Care Education at Tallahassee Memorial, which will help train and keep nurses, EMTs, radiologists, dental hygienists and other health care practitioners in the capital area.

Through the summit, we will be asking students whether we are offering exactly the right training, courses, technology and instruction. We will be asking our education and business partners whether we are preparing our students for success beyond TCC. We are united in our commitment to improve our performance and our students' success, and I invite you to join us.

## Our Opinion: Work-force building

Economic forecasters suggest that short-term improvements in the job market will likely come from construction-related jobs driven by local government projects.

If that scenario described by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics holds true, it's critical that those doing the hiring are able to reach out to their own communities for workers with the skills to step into those jobs.

That's why this week's news that Workforce Plus will be receiving a little over \$1 million in a YouthBuild grant from the U.S. Labor Department is a big step in the right direction. The only such grant awarded in Florida, it shows what success this community can experience as it combines the talents from academics, vocational skills training, local governments and the construction industry to build a skilled work force.

Through this grant, specifically, the Gadsden YouthBuild program will target for training 60 Gadsden County residents ages 16 to 24 who are considered part of the disadvantaged at-risk population.

Such a program could have a small but important impact in Gadsden County, which has a 10.9-percent unemployment rate and where fewer than 50 percent of its students graduate from high school.

The grant will allow WorkForce Plus to hire a project manager and instructors for participants who will

spend half of their time in a classroom working toward a high-school diploma or GED. Tallahassee Community College, one of the partners in the grant, will provide both classroom space and scholarships for continuing education.

The second half of the project teaches participants a construction trade aimed at certification in such skills as heating and air conditioning, solar installation and so on.

The Tallahassee Builders Association, Sperry and Associates, Premier Bank and the Florida Masonry Apprentice & Educational Foundation are grant partners. And ultimately, the students will build a 1,000-square-foot house on land donated by the city of Midway and sell it to perpetuate training programs.

The Bureau of Labor estimates that workers with certified construction skills will be more in demand as so-called "shovel-ready" building projects get under way in local communities.

Kimberly Moore, CEO of Workforce Plus, said that the \$25.6 million Joint Dispatch Center in Leon County, for example, could generate numerous jobs.

The Gadsden YouthBuild project is one of many efforts designed to create a more diverse work force. It's important that local governments identify projects that can be fast-tracked to make these opportunities available.

## Visitors, residents can get wild about Wakulla

BY BONNIE HOLUB

WAKULLA COUNTY CORRESPONDENT

Many years ago — too many to remember — a bunch of us sat around a conference table at Wakulla Springs Lodge on a semi-weekly basis charged with planning the annual Wakulla Wildlife Festival. The festival's genesis was originally called "Welcome Back Songbirds" and was held at the St. Marks National Wildlife Festival, but as the festival evolved, its scope and venue were changed, along with the name.

During those early years, future festival visions were often bantered about, and I distinctly remember two of them. One was to create an annual celebration of ducks and the other was to expand the one-day Wakulla Wildlife Festival to a weeklong event.

Back then, it seemed a monumental effort to plan a one-day festival successful enough to draw a large crowd to the county and keep them coming back each year. We, the organizers, even gave out numerous door prizes, gathered from local merchants, to attract participants. So to think of a weeklong festival was a mighty vision.

Robin Will, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge supervisory ranger, first proposed the idea of a celebration of the ducks, which I especially liked. These waterfowl are often overlooked when it comes to wildlife watching and it would be fun to educate visitors about gadwalls, pintails, scaup, coot, canvasbacks, buffleheads and other duck species. Even the names are ear-catching.

We also thought the duck event could be economically beneficial to the community, as it would draw more visitors to Wakulla in late November, a time of year when tourism is low and there are fewer competing festivals. Sadly, the "Welcome Back Quacks" event never got off the water.

However, I'm happy to report, although I am no longer involved in festival planning, that starting April 1, Wakulla visitors and residents can enjoy a week (and more) of festivities during "Wild About Wakulla Week," the next generation of Wakulla's wildlife festivals. The festival highlights the rich heritage and natural beauty of Wakulla County through a diverse selection of activities for all ages and most interests.

## Our Opinion: If one issue rises above all others, it's education

The most agreed-upon fundamental duties of state government are public safety, education and transportation.

Together they consume the lion's share of funding.

But of these three, the one that is indisputably the most visionary — more Tomorrowland than a bullet train — is education.

From prekindergarten through our colleges and universities, our schools are the transportation corridor leading to a better economy through jobs, better health through science and a better ability to reason and reflect on all quandaries that the future holds.

As the Florida Legislature begins its 2011 session today, we urge legislators to remember that nothing else they do is more important than fortifying education so that it is energizing, as well as efficient.

Education is the most populist issue of all.

Every generation — every mom and dad regardless of how liberal or conservative — depends on the excellence of our schools and teachers to launch today's children into happy, healthy productivity.

Gov. Rick Scott wants lawmakers to cut public school spending by 10 percent — after schools have experienced more than two years of cuts already.

This is a reduction so severe that, as longtime educator and Tallahassee area state Sen. Bill Montford warns, it's not just sports and extracurriculars at stake. "We're talking core academic programs. It's really important that we educate the public about what this would mean," he said.

And a proposal to tie teacher pay and employment to their students' test scores is almost a sure thing — this, despite a USA Today special report published Monday that indicates the mounting pressure on schools nationwide to judge everything by high test scores has warped the system. This relentless focus has become a disincentive to teaching that actually benefits students who will compete in a vigorous world economy where rote fact-gathering and a multiple-choice mentality are laughable.

(Lawmakers ought to seriously consider legislation filed

to phase out the use of the FCAT as the only tool for determining student and school performance in most grades.)

When our public schools are shortchanged, the problems don't just disappear. A work force has to be trained somehow.

Institutions such as [Tallahassee Community College](#) give students fresh starts and second chances that are indisputable lures to attracting new companies and fortifying existing ones. They require our investment, which increases when the public schools aren't able to do their job.

Florida's "educational partners," such as our local campus of Keiser University and the state's many nonprofit independent colleges and universities and for-profit postsecondary schools and colleges, are major players, too.

Yet, after years of making progress in work force development, they are threatened with reductions in merit-based and need-based grants that help ensure a skilled work force.

And while our public universities have long been considered the "economic engines" of our state by nearly all resourceful thinkers, including the Council of 100 and Florida Chamber of Commerce, the phrase is beginning to ring hollow following vast reductions in state funding for our universities the last three years.

The temptation during the next 59 days will be for lawmakers to find short-term solutions to long-simmering problems. But education isn't one of those that can be resolved during the short time they have in public office.

It is the one long-term investment of public dollars that pays back time and again in job creation, creative resourcefulness and self-sufficiency. Public education is what sets our nation apart and always has.

Lawmakers of both parties and from communities large and small: Every time a vote comes up regarding support for education, we urge you to err on the side of "yes."

## FSU's Bernard James doesn't regret road traveled to college basketball

### James truly living a dream

BY COREY CLARK

NOLESPORTS.COM EDITOR

He answers the question twice. It's one he's never been asked before and he hesitates when he first hears it.

So initially, Bernard James says "yes." Then he corrects himself. No. Absolutely not. The Florida State junior does not wish he could go back in time, and talk to 15-year-old Bernard James, to shake that direction-less teenager into realizing what kind of potential he had both athletically and intellectually.

"I wouldn't be the person I am today," James said. "I think my experiences have made me a much better person than if I had gone the typical route."

Here's the typical route for a starter on an ACC basketball team: Live and breathe the sport for most of childhood, get connected with a strong AAU program, play year-round, do enough academically to be eligible for college, dominate high school opponents, play in all-star games, enjoy the courtship that comes with the recruiting process, pick up a hat, choose a school and then enroll.

What James has done however belongs in a movie script.

His is a story about a boy becoming a man and then that man having to see unthinkable things to grasp his dreams.

As a freshman at Windsor Forest High School in Savannah, Ga., James skipped the entire week of conditioning for ninth-grade basketball tryouts. Not surprisingly, he didn't make the team.

Two years later he quit high school altogether.

"I just had no motivation," he said. "I just really didn't enjoy high school from a social standpoint or an academic standpoint."

And honestly he didn't really enjoy basketball. He says the first time he picked up a basketball was when he was 12 and he may have played "once or twice a month" during his teenage years.

His favorite athletic endeavor instead?

"I was really into rollerblading," James said.

No. Seriously.

"Oh yeah, the ramps and everything," he added with a smile.

Now he's the starting center on an NCAA Tournament team, getting ready to play in his first ACC Tournament.

"It's almost like 'The Blind Side,'" teammate Luke Loucks said. "Not in the sense of their backgrounds and their personal stories, but in that they had no direction when they were younger. They didn't know what they were going to do with their life. Then all of the sudden they get around the right people, the right situations, realize their potential and put themselves in a position to have a great opportunity for the rest of their life."

"It's a great story."

The soldier

As a 17-year-old dropout who struggled with motivation, joining the United States Air Force wouldn't seem to be the logical next step.

For James, though, it made perfect sense.

"I saw it as an opportunity," he said. "I took it as a challenge, a rite of passage in becoming an adult. I thought once I make it through this I can have my own money, get my own place, have my own car, be independent. So that's why I challenged myself with it."

And believe him when he tells you it was a challenge.

Especially for a kid that quit freshman basketball tryouts because he didn't want to take part in the conditioning.

"Yeah, it was a shock when I got to basic training," James said. "I was like, what did I get myself into? But then after about a day or two you get used to the routine."

Other things were much harder to get used to though.

On his third deployment to the Middle East — he served as a security guard at a base in Qatar and as a customs agent in Kuwait beforehand — James was a military guard at an Iraqi prison.

That's where he came face-to-face with evil virtually every day.

It was those eyes. He'll never be able to forget those eyes.

"You could just tell, with the way they looked at you," James said of some of the prisoners. "There was a certain look in their eyes. Almost like a killer instinct. And you

## FSU's Bernard James doesn't regret road traveled to college basketball...

*continued*

knew some of these guys had done horrible, horrible things."

Sometimes right there in the prison.

James said there were four times, by his count, that a prisoner was brought up to the security station by another detainee. Already dead from a stabbing or strangulation.

No amount of training prepared him for what it was like to see death up close.

"One guy had like 18 stab wounds," James said. "I think it was from like an ice-pick type thing. It was kind of crazy seeing that. His insides were oozing out — and it was really kind of shocking."

It's an image that won't go away.

"It doesn't really haunt me, I guess," James said. "But I can definitely picture it like it was yesterday. It's still fresh in my mind."

He spent six years of his life "basically being a cop" in some of the most dangerous places on earth.

When he left the Air Force, he was five inches taller and a world wiser than when he joined. And, after falling in love with the sport he consciously ignored as a kid, he had a dream to go chase.

The basketball player

The story of how James got to Florida State is simply too long to fit into one newspaper article — and again it would work better in that movie script anyway.

But after being discovered during an international military basketball tournament in Las Vegas in 2005, James realized Division I college basketball was a very real possibility. For the next two deployments in the Middle East, James would tell anyone that would listen that he was going to play at FSU.

And after a GED and a stellar career at [Tallahassee Community College](#), that's exactly what he's doing. A starter on an NCAA Tournament team without having played a second of high school basketball.

"I talked to him earlier in the season," assistant coach Stan Jones said. "And I told him, 'Bernard, you're a great story.

But you can be an even greater story if you continue to push yourself and demand excellence of yourself.' And he's really responded. I'm very proud of him."

For the season, the 6-foot-10 James is averaging 8.3 points, 5.6 rebounds and 2.3 blocks (fourth-best in the ACC) per game. He is shooting 64.2 percent from the field, with most of his points coming on layups and vicious left-handed dunks.

Though he's proven he can play at this level, he admits he wasn't so sure when the season began.

"I was doubting myself," James said. "I was doubting the things they had taught me. I wasn't really comfortable with our system yet. But (the coaches) adjusted my mindset and helped me get right. It was all about aggression."

He's still not as aggressive as they would like him to be though. And he knows it.

"Yeah my coaches are always telling me they want to see me get mad," James said. "And I'm like, 'Well, if I get mad, somebody might get hurt.'"

Remember, Bernard James' definition of "killer instinct" is a thousand miles away from the one used in the sports world.

He's 26. He's felt real-life pressure that makes Cameron Indoor Stadium utterly insignificant by comparison. He's starting in the ACC with a realistic shot of playing professional basketball.

He's so adept at fixing computers and other gadgets that Loucks calls him "Geek Squad," and James is on course to graduate next year with a major in economics and a minor in business.

His mother has expressed repeatedly, almost weekly, how proud she is of his accomplishments.

"That sort of satisfies a childhood need I had," James said. "I didn't do a whole lot right when I was younger. I wasn't really bad, but I didn't really get told 'I'm proud of you.' So it means a lot."

Such is the new life of Bernard James.

And in case you were wondering, no, he wouldn't change a thing.

## TCC president has reached tipping point on e-books

SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

A few artful questions for Tallahassee Community College President Dr. Jim Murdaugh.

Q: Do you own any original art?

A: Yes. I have a collection of priceless paintings and pottery created by my son.

Q: What was the first concert you ever attended?

RELATED

A: Moody Blues.

Q: What book is on your nightstand right now?

A: I have no book on my nightstand, as I read very few hard copy books any more, but I do have my iPad with the audiobook of "The Tipping Point," by Malcolm Gladwell that I recently finished.

Q: When was the last time you danced?

A: It has been over a year — at a local benefit event.

Q: What was the last live performance you saw?

A: Bill Cosby's performance at Seven Days of Opening Nights.

Q: What movie has most affected you?

A: "Band of Brothers." It reminds us all that soldiers fight for our country, but they die for the soldier beside them.

Q: What was the last thing you made by hand?

A: Decorative wooden boxes as gifts.

Q: When was the last time you were on a stage?

A: TCC's Student Success Summit.

Q: What artistic talent do you wish you had?

A: Any!

Read Murdaugh's new blog at <http://blog.tcc.fl.edu/president/>.



## Financial Aid Rock

The musical genre might be called Fafsabilly.

Pat Watkins, director of financial aid at Eckerd College, owns her job in the way she knows best -- with song and a good sense of humor. In 1997, she found four like-minded financial aid administrators, and they formed the Florida Five, a troupe of balladeers who take the ironies and jargon of financial aid advising and turn them into impassioned ditties.

They accept invitations. For example, a few years ago, they appeared at the Louisville Slugger Museum for a Kentucky Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators conference. A mechanical pitcher threw fastballs into a corner, ash bats lined the walls, and the group held the floor, singing their original hits: "There's No Business Like the Aid Business," "The Preregistration Blues," "Don't Cry For Me Leo Kornfeld," and, to the music of Annie, "Tomorrow," an illustrious ode to smart financial planning.

Louisville sluggers and the prospects of less-than-crippling debt? The crowd cheered, whistled, and gave a standing ovation.

"You give us any chance, and we'll sing," Watkins says.

The Florida Five (sometimes more than five) are: Kathy Campbell, a former representative for a Texas loan guarantee agency; Wayne Bodiford, director for financial aid at St. Johns River State College; Bill Spiers, Jr., director of financial aid at [Tallahassee Community College](#); Watkins herself, of Eckerd; and pianist Ruth Strum, director of financial aid at Clearwater Christian College. Sometimes Mike O'Grady, a saxophonist who for years worked as a lender's representative and who is now vice president of sales for Overture Technologies, joins them too.

Watkins composes the songs herself. "I had to write them -- otherwise you'll go crazy," she says. "We're there to help students, and so many times students take financial aid extremely seriously and tend to get very stressed out, which affects their ability to deal with students and parents as well as their families."

Some songs play on perennial struggles. "The Preregistration Blues" riffs on the rhythm to "I've Got the Blues":

Every day is a battle, and the war I'm about to lose

I got those pre-registration Blues

Student in the office (da da da da dah)

Can't find his file (da da da da dah)

Searched through all of the cabinets (da da da da dah)

Went through all of the piles (da da da da dah)

Six hours later he screams in my ear

"I filled out my FAFSA, but not this year!"

Another song, "I Go On and On," plays off the Celine Dion hit. It came to Watkins while she was sitting in the audience of a friend's child's grade school performance of "Titanic." "In school, I go on and on, and that's how I wrote it," she says. "I sat down and I just -- it just came to me -- it just flowed all together."

Her rendition of one of the verses: "Your education is through / Your loans are due / But no employer will hire you."

You have to get through the day somehow. Call it her "Eye of the Tiger."

Just this month Watkins composed a song that might be of some interest to proponents of for-profit college reform. "Gainful Employment," sang to the melody of "Together" from the musical *Gypsy*, goes like this:

Wherever you go

Whatever you do

Make sure you get

Gainful Employment

Watkins says the Florida Five began after she had found herself putting lyrics to the situational humor she encounters on the job. She pitched the idea to some friends, saying they could sing in the style of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney backyard musicals. They arranged the songs, started practicing, and, before long, were performing at industry conferences. In 1999, they went national, singing in Las Vegas during the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators conference.

## Financial Aid Rock....

*continued*

Most recently, they sang at the Education Writers Association's conference for higher education reporters in early February in St. Petersburg.

Putting the maddening to melody is something Watkins has done since childhood. Growing up, she says she idolized Tom Lehrer's songs, parodies that flipped the norms of society on their head. That attitude quickly lent itself to financial aid. "If you don't have fun in this business then you shouldn't be here," she says.

She recalls one of the first times a financial aid song arose from a difficult situation. "One time I was working in a college, and the director of admissions would break out in hives," she says. "So I wrote a blues song about that." She started singing the "I've Got the Blues" refrain: "Woke up about a quarter after three. He's shaking his finger, he's cursing my name, can't make his numbers, and I'm to blame." She pauses for the beat. "I've got the preregistration blues."

Oh, and they sing for free.

## TCC student dies after being struck by StarMetro bus

BY AMANDA CURCIO

DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

A Tallahassee Community College student died early Wednesday morning after he was struck by a StarMetro bus.

Nickolas Quintin Williams, 20, was pronounced dead at about 1 a.m. at the scene, located in the 400 block of Appleyard Drive, said Officer Susan Newhouse, spokeswoman for the Tallahassee Police Department.

Investigators reported that the bus was traveling south on Appleyard Drive when it began to change lanes to approach the turn lane heading east on West Pensacola Street.

Williams was in the southbound lane “when he appeared without notice and was struck,” Newhouse said.

Newhouse said that further details could not be released because the investigation is ongoing.

TCC spokeswoman Susie Hall said Wednesday that the college’s community was just learning of Williams’ death.

“We are offering grief counseling to those who knew him,” Hall said.

Funeral arrangements for Williams were not yet known.

The driver of the bus, Gregory Vickers, 43, was placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation, said Michelle Bono, assistant to the city manager. He has one minor crash on his StarMetro driving record in which a bicycle rack on the bus scratched a vehicle. Vickers has been with StarMetro since October 2007.

Two passengers were on the bus at the time — a Florida A&M University student and a Florida State University employee. City officials contacted both universities along with TCC, Bono said. FSU and FAMU are offering counseling to the two passengers, she added.

“From the city, our hearts and prayers are with the family of this young man (Williams),” Bono said.

Democrat Senior Government Editor Jeff Burlew contributed to this report.

## James the X-factor in 'Noles' Final Four hunt

**Brett Jula**  
SPORTS EDITOR

Florida State's run to the Sweet 16 has been considered improbable by many prognosticators. Perhaps the only thing more improbable is the man who's most responsible for lifting the Seminoles to their fourth regional semifinal in school history.

We should all be familiar by now of Bernard James' incredible story, where prior to his arrival at FSU, he spent two years at [Tallahassee Community College](#) and before then, served six years in the U.S. Air Force, where he did tours in Qatar and Iraq.

To say James has come a long way is an understatement, and while he's worked hard to put himself and his teammates into their current position-just two victories from an unimaginable trip to Houston for the Final Four-he'll have to work a little harder to make that happen.

Not like that should be anything new for James, given his military history.

Playing off his military background, James has been the lead officer of the Seminole army in their first two tournament games, dominating the interior while averaging 12 points, eight rebounds and three blocks per game this tournament. If the 'Noles can rattle off two more wins and advance to that aforementioned Final Four, it would be shocking to see anyone other than James receive Most Outstanding Player honors for the Southwest Region, because without James' imposing presence, FSU can throw any hope they have of returning to the Lone Star State the following weekend out the window.

James may not have the numbers of your typical tournament standout, but should anyone have expected them to be? If the Seminoles were going to make it this far in the tournament, anyone who's kept a remotely close eye on this team throughout the season knew they had to turn to turn their games against Texas A&M and Notre Dame into defensive battles, and that's exactly what they did.

One could argue, however, that their win over Notre

Dame was their most complete game of the season, and it's not a coincidence that it was James' most complete game this season as well. James, who was suffering from an illness earlier in the day, fought through adversity and contributed 14 points, 10 rebounds and three blocks for his fourth double-double of the season. His play against the Irish was a clear indication that this team will go as far in this tournament as the 25-year-old junior takes them-especially considering ACC Defensive Player of the Year Chris Singleton is still getting his playing legs back after missing the last six regular season games with a foot injury.

In their game against Notre Dame, FSU shot the proverbial lights out, connecting on nine 3-pointers-seven of which came in the first half. Given the inconsistencies this team has had on offense throughout the season, it's a near-guarantee that points will be at a premium for the 'Noles in San Antonio. This makes James' presence even more important, as his ability to alter shots and rebound will be key to FSU's success this weekend.

The 6-foot-10 James couldn't have asked for a better opponent to potentially continue his strong play in this tournament, as Virginia Commonwealth's starting frontcourt has an average height of only 6'7", and the Rams rank 301st in the nation in rebounding. This also bodes well for fellow big men Xavier Gibson and Jon Kreft, who are both 6'10".

It will be a potential matchup with No. 1 seed Kansas in the regional final where James will have to earn his basketball stripes-we all know he's earned more than his share away from the court.

The Jayhawks have arguably the most dynamic frontcourt in the nation in twin brothers Marcus and Markieff Morris, and they are the top-two scorers and rebounders on the Kansas roster. Both of the Morris brothers average more than 13 points and seven rebounds per game.

But let's not look too far ahead-let's keep the focus on Virginia Commonwealth. I'm sure that's the only thing on James' mind.



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### Wakulla News - March 17, 2011

## TCC Wakulla Center now offering:

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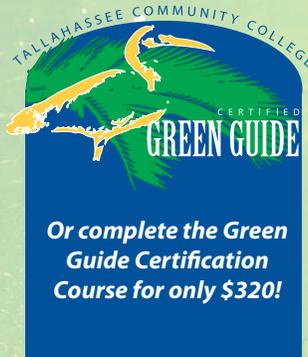
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- March 16 . . . . . Ecosystems Workshop
- March 22 . . . . . Geological Features
- March 28 . . . . . Florida Archaeology and Pre-history
- March 29 . . . . . Birds of the Region
- March 30 . . . . . Creating Web Pages and Web Marketing II
- April 12. . . . . Local Mammal and Reptiles

**Field Trips** \$40 each from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

- March 20 . . . . . Kayaking
- March 26 . . . . . Leon Sinks
- April 2 . . . . . Birding and Sea Life
- April 9 . . . . . Historical & Cultural Sites: Fort San Marcos
- April 16. . . . . Wakulla Sinks
- April 23. . . . . FSU Marine Lab



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Leon High School - March 24, 2011

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**TCC Preview**—April 11

**TCC Spring 2012 Scholarship Application**—June 1  
online at [www.tcc.fl.edu/scholarships](http://www.tcc.fl.edu/scholarships)

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