

COLUMBUS CONSIDERS CUTTING COLLEGE COSTS

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With the increasing costs of higher-education dominating national policy conversations, Ohio Governor John Kasich has issued an executive order creating a task force to examine areas in which the state's public universities can increase operational efficiency and reduce costs.

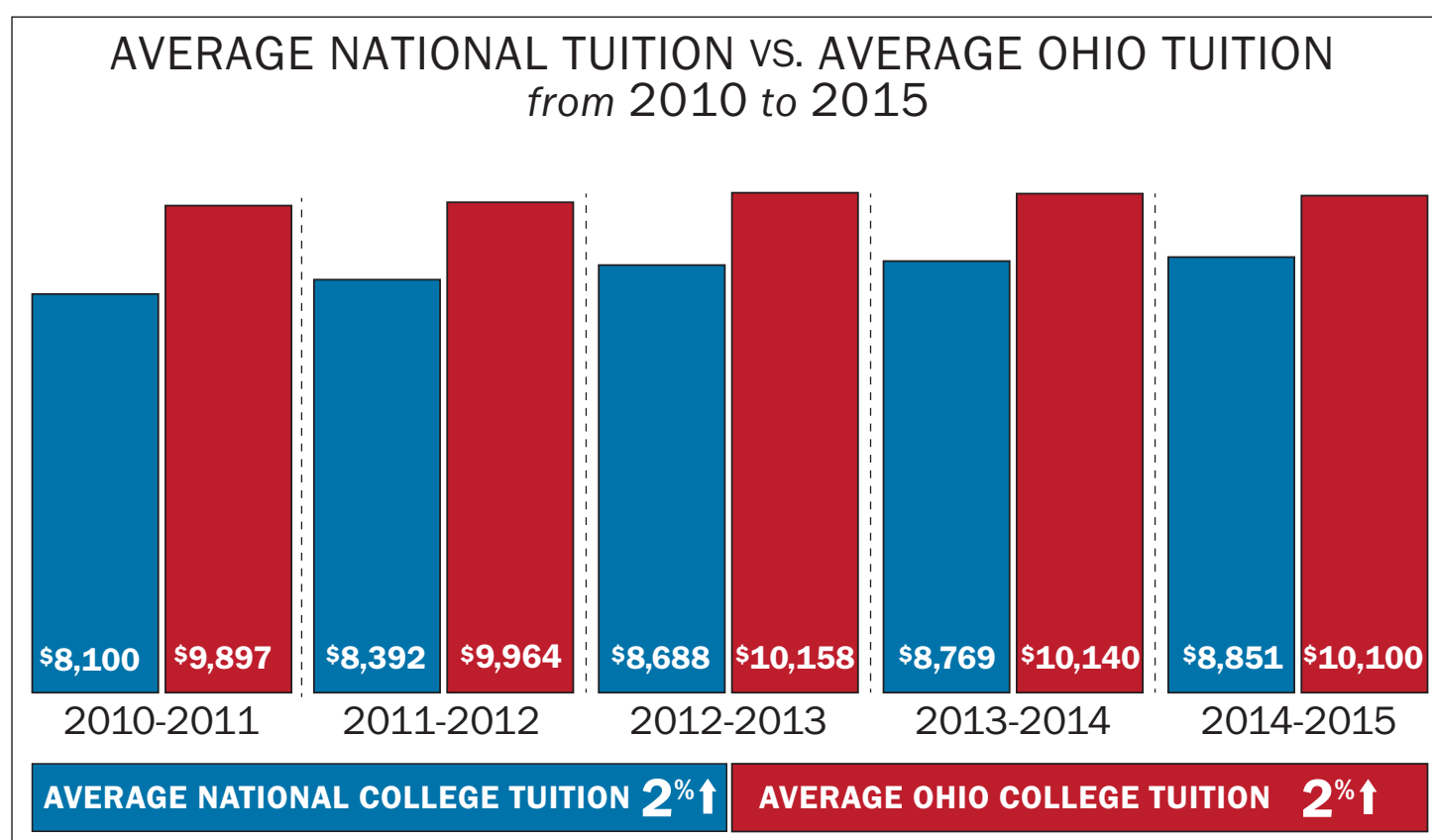
According to a press release, "the new, nine-member task force will examine a number of opportunities where schools can lower costs and increase efficiencies, such as shared services and outsourcing, administrative staffing levels, more efficient space utilization, elimination of low-enrollment courses, intellectual property that has potential to be commercialized and the use of technology to reduce costs."

Geoffrey Chatas, chief financial officer at Ohio State University, will chair the task force.

This announcement comes on the heels of Republicans in the state senate, led by senate president Keith Faber, introducing Senate Bill 4 which would require all Ohio public universities to reduce their costs to students by 5 percent.

Kasich alluded to Senate Bill 4 in the press conference announcing the task force.

"I know how difficult it is for these institutions to bring about a significant amount of change.



It gets to be about culture, about the way we've always done things, and so we want to give them a chance to adjust, but they're all willing, able, ready and anxious to start to move to deal with these cost problems," Kasich said. "And I would caution anyone who wants to get involved in massive cuts to the universities to wait."

The Perils of Price Controls

Neal McNally, interim vice president for finance and administration at Youngstown

State University, said YSU currently receives \$100 million in revenue in tuition and fees and a 5 percent reduction would be significant.

"You can do the math pretty easily and see that the 5 percent rollback on that price is going to cause a \$5 million reduction in our revenue, so it would be devastating to us," McNally said.

He also pointed out that the state has been asking for universities to reduce time to degree completion, which runs contradictory to the goal of re-

ducing costs.

"We'd love to get students through a four-year degree in four years and reduce the average that's upward of six years currently. But in order to do that, you need to be able to provide adequate course sections and course offerings, you need to provide adequate student advising, all those sorts of services you need to provide. And if you reduce our price, and reduce our revenues, we're not going to have the ability to fund those other types of services and course offerings and

all the additional things we need to fulfill the state's other goal of helping students graduate sooner," McNally said.

AJ Sumell, professor of economics at YSU, said imposing price controls always creates inefficient outcomes because it ignores the market conditions that determine prices.

"If you're just forcing the price to be lower, that has to have an impact to these institutions as far as the quality of the

GRAPHIC BY STACY RUBINIC/THE JAMBAR

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YSU Admissions Up 66 Percent

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Compared to admission statistics at this time last year, Youngstown State University has experienced a significant increase in the number of freshmen who have applied and been admitted to the university for the 2015 fall semester.

Comparing Feb. 24, 2015 to Feb. 25, 2014, the statistics found a 121 percent rise — or a 3,272 student increase — in students who have applied and a 66 percent rise — or a 1,438 student increase — in students who have been admitted.

In addition, the number of scholarships awarded has increased by 751, out-of-state admissions have increased by 295 students, the average GPA of admitted students has increased from 3.03 to 3.23 and the average ACT has increased

from 20.77 to 21.37.

Martin Abraham, YSU's provost, listed a number of factors that have helped bolster enrollment statistics, including the university's 2014 decision to hire on Royall & Company, a third-party enrollment manager, to combat sinking enrollment.

"First and foremost, we hired Royall & Company, which is the recruiting firm that we have been working with; they have put in a lot of effort in terms of streamlining our process and getting us the contact information for prospective students," Abraham said. "Gary Swegan has been doing a great job of getting the word out to students. ... The president has been busy visiting high schools all over the area. All of these have added to the growth in the enrollment. Then the other piece, that has been happening for a number of years, YSU is just doing a better job getting the word out about the quality of the educa-

tion that we can provide."

Gary Swegan, the associate vice president of enrollment and management, agreed with Abraham.

"[Royall & Company] are able to do marketing that we simply don't have the person power to do, ... to continue to contact the student time after time after time," Swegan said. "When I got here 15 months ago, all I ever heard, whether it was a faculty and staff member or a member of the community, was, 'My students just hardly ever heard anything from YSU.' Now what we are hearing is, 'Oh my gosh just leave us alone.' ... I would much rather have somebody say, 'Okay I'm not interested stop contacting me than be interested and not be getting any information from us.'"

Swegan made it clear that although this increase in admitted students is a good sign, he was still focused on the bottom line: enrollment.

"We still have a lot of work to do," Swegan said. "We have set a goal to be up at least 20 percent in incoming undergraduate students. So what does that mean? We had 1,734 freshmen last year; we would like to have 2,100. We had about 560 transfers; we would like to have 675. ... Really my message to my entire team is that it is all about who we get to commit and not about who we get to fill out a piece of paper."

As of now, it is unclear to what extent these improved statistics will impact enrollment. Swegan pointed out that as YSU accesses a wider body of students in a wider area, a

FACULTY CONTRACT RATIFIED TO MIXED EMOTIONS

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After nearly a year of negotiations, fact finding, mud slinging and strike threats, Youngstown State University's administration and the faculty, represented by the YSU-Ohio Educators Association labor union, have reached a contract deal.

Tuesday, the YSU Board of Trustees ratified a three-year contract for faculty members represented by YSU-OEA. The contract passed by a 17-vote margin during a YSU-OEA vote on Feb. 17. According to the contract, there will be no salary increases in the first contract year, 2014-2015, a 1 percent increase in the second year and a third year 2 percent increase, as well as an increase to bonuses in the second and third contract years.

While the ratification does bring a close to the longest contract negotiation in YSU history, the tensions between the faculty and administration remain.

Despite YSU-OEA voting in favor of the contract, a union press release suggested the salary increases were not truly increases, stating: "... it should be pointed out that these increases were TOTALLY subsidized by givebacks from the faculty."

The Board of Trustees ratified the contract in a 7-2 vote. Dave Deibel and Harry Meshel opposed the vote, with Meshel going on to criticize union leadership — specifically Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, the YSU-OEA chief negotiator.

"If you're not going to behave honestly and with respect for your opponent, then you shouldn't be in a negotiating team, and you shouldn't be running a program that has to do with ethics either. That to me is abominable," Meshel said.

Though The Jambar could not obtain a response from Palmer-Fernandez, a Vindicator report included Palmer-Fernandez dismissing the remarks as unworthy of further comment.

Meshel opted to vote no because he "wanted nothing to do" with the contract, taking issue with the number of faculty who actually participated in the vote and the narrow margin by which it passed.

Of the nearly 400 members of YSU-OEA, 207 voted on the contract.

As suggested by the YSU-OEA's press release, many of the faculty are unhappy with the new contract despite its passing. David Porter, professor of political science, said he believes the contract hurts both professors and the university.

"It's a bad contract ... specifically it's going to cost me about 10 percent of my income and about \$120,000 in retirement, not

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GARY SWEGAN PHOTO BY FRANK GEORGE/THE JAMBAR.

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YSUnity Hosts Discussion Series

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YSUnity is holding a series of discussions focused on LGBTQIA issues. The first discussion was held on Feb. 25 in the Ohio Room of Kilcawley Center, with more to occur in the following weeks.

YSUnity promotes awareness of issues related to LGBTQIA students, providing support and “safe zones” for all LGBTQIA students and staff, with the aim to create a more welcoming campus for the students of the LGBTQIA community. The group utilizes campus activism, education and events to network with other organizations and businesses on and off campus to foster a diverse community.

Tim Bortner, president of YSUnity, works on campus to educate and help facilitate the group.

“We don’t discriminate; we don’t judge. Even if you don’t fit into the acronym, you can be yourself,” Bortner said. “Not only are we a support group, but we are a social group and a community group.”

Lisa Ronquillo, vice president and student adviser of YSUnity, said the round table discussions are focusing on how they can further educate people on matters of suicide — particularly in the transgender community — marriage equality and being “out” in a place of employment.

“These are issues I focused on in the prior two years that I was president but feel the need to continue to have open discussions on how we can keep creating a safe space for our members and allies,” Ronquillo said.

YSUnity asked other organizations in the community — such as PFLAG, formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, The Pride Center located downtown and Equality of Ohio

— to attend the discussions. Bortner stated that they wanted this discussion to be a free place where people can express themselves and talk openly.

“You can tell your personal experience or story. It is also a confidential place where privacy is offered,” Bortner said.

YSUnity’s second discussion will be held March 4 at 5 p.m. focused on “LGBTQIA Through the Eyes of Different Religions.”

A panel of experts on the world’s major religions will discuss how LGBTQIA issues are viewed in the context of different religions.

There will be a question-and-answer period where members of the audience can engage with the panelists. YSUnity will also provide a list of questions for the panel members.

“I feel that it is vital to open up the floor regarding spirituality topics, as many of our members consistently struggle with their identity in a religious sense and how and where they might

fit in,” Ronquillo said.

YSUnity is co-sponsoring this event with the women’s studies department.

Michael Jerryson, professor of philosophy and world religions, will be a member of the panel and will discuss Buddhist beliefs. Jerryson said he believes those attending may be surprised by the evolution of religious thought in regard to sexual identity and gender orientation.

“Religions have a checkered past in how they deal with nonheterosexual identities. There has been a large pattern in global religions to have a lack of tolerance for nonheterosexual relationships. This has changed in recent years, which is interesting for a lot of these faiths though. What we’re seeing right now is a lot of fluidity in how groups, communities and authorities view nonheterosexual commitments,” Jerryson said.

As a continuing leader of YSUnity, Ronquillo feels that it is important that their organization contin-

ues to educate the campus and the community at large.

“Awareness is the key to breaking down many of the walls that surround issues by default. If these walls no longer exist, then it would be possible to have a more loving and safe environment,” Ronquillo said.

YSUnity held a previous event featuring a group of religious studies professors of all backgrounds, including a campus minister, as well as religious studies students.

The goal Bortner wants to achieve from the events is to create awareness, to enlighten and to educate people.

“Even if we only educate, enlighten or create awareness for one person, that is one more person in the world that we opened their mind a little bit more to our community,” Bortner said.

All discussions are free to the public. Bortner is expecting students, staff, faculty and the community to attend the YSUnity discussions.

UN Officials Fear An Attack On Mosul Will Displace 1.5 Million People

John Zarocostas

McClatchy Foreign Staff
(TNS)

GENEVA — A planned offensive to retake the city of Mosul from Islamic State insurgents, perhaps as soon as April, could send more than 1.5 million people fleeing, a senior United Nations humanitarian relief official warned Tuesday.

More than 2 million people already were displaced last summer when Islamic State militants captured Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, then swept through northern and central Iraq.

Syed Jaffer Hussain, the

World Health Organization’s representative in Iraq, told reporters that the planned offensive was likely to send hundreds of thousands of people from Mosul into Dohuk in Iraqi Kurdistan. A similar warning was issued Tuesday by the International Committee of the Red Cross in a call for preparations to be made for dealing with the humanitarian fallout from the fighting.

“The broadening of the conflict to populated areas along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers will create more humanitarian needs. If major cities like Mosul come under fire again, thousands more people will have to flee,” the ICRC said. “Because security conditions are so uncertain, many areas remain out of reach for

humanitarian organizations, and large numbers of people will be without help when they need it most,” it added.

Hussain, who is based in Baghdad, was in Geneva along with WHO country representatives from Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic to brief diplomats from 57 donor countries on why they need more than \$1 billion to support ongoing aid efforts in the four countries.

Hussain said the expected Mosul campaign — a U.S. military briefer told reporters in Washington last week the offensive would involve 25,000 Iraqi troops and begin in April or May — would be sure to add Iraq’s humanitarian burden, which already includes more than 2.2 million people who’ve

fled their homes and more than 5 million whose shelter, food and health needs are barely being met. He said that the turmoil that Iraqis have lived with for two decades has “reduced to a large extent” the ability of the country’s health system to respond.

He pointed out that 400,000 people had fled their homes just between November and January.

He gave a bleak accounting of the country’s health facilities, region by region: “In Salahuddin, 50 percent of health facilities are non-functional. In Anbar and Ninevah 20 percent are also non-functional, and in Sinjar, only 20 percent.”

Forty-five percent of the country’s medical workers

have been displaced, according to a WHO assessment of the country by WHO. That displacement is especially hard in Mosul, surrounding Ninevah province as well as Anbar, the province west of Baghdad, the assessment said.

A senior U.N. official told McClatchy that the U.N. has received credible reports that the Islamic State recently executed a number of doctors in Anbar province.

Hussain told McClatchy the flight of doctors from the country that began with the U.S. invasion in 2003 continues. Iraq now has about 16,400 physicians, fewer than half the 34,000 believed to have been there prior to the 2003 invasion.



PHOTO BY JUSTIN WIER/THE JAMBAR.

Valerie Plame spoke about her book “Fair Game,” documenting the reveal of her status as a CIA agent due to political maneuvering, as well as the dangers of nuclear proliferation, at Stambaugh Auditorium last night as part of the Skeggs Lecture Series.

SIGMA TAU GAMMA CELEBRATES RECENT SUCCESSES

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Youngstown State University's chapter of Sigma Tau Gamma is boasting the highest grades of all its chapters throughout the entire country this past year.

The chapter is an extension of the national college fraternity that was founded in 1920 by veterans of the First World War.

Brandon O'Neill, president of the YSU chapter of Sigma Tau Gamma, explained the mission of YSU's

chapter of the fraternity.

"Our main mission is to develop better leaders, not only for Youngstown State but out in the community. The ultimate goal is to create successful individuals for when they graduate and move on with their lives outside of college," O'Neill said.

The criteria to get into the fraternity are focused on attracting students with academic success and hours spent volunteering at the university. O'Neill said that although the policy requires a 2.5 grade point average minimum, he would like to have members with at least a 3.0.

The fraternity currently houses 31 male students and conducts meetings every Sunday at 8 p.m.

O'Neill said that what separates the YSU chapter of Sigma Tau Gam-

ma from other nationwide chapters is the "outstanding excellence" of its members.

"This past year, the YSU chapter of Sig Tau had the highest grades in the entire country out of all the chapters. We came in second place for members who have leadership positions on campus and other organizations," O'Neill said.

O'Neill added that recruitment is a large part of the process of having these notable members.

"Basically, it all comes down to recruiting. I think that we have a lot of high quality members and therefore other high quality men on campus are attracted to that idea of coming together. We are looking for the best guys on campus, and the best guys on campus are the ones that are going to step up and be SGA presidents and be leaders in their respective organizations," O'Neill said.

Three Student Government Association presidents were members of the fraternity. An alumnus of Sigma Tau Gamma started the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation. Michael Ray, a Youngstown city councilman, is another alumnus of the fraternity.

Michael Slavens, president of the YSU SGA and a member of Sigma Tau Gamma, expressed his sentiment for his participation in the fraternity.

"We pride ourselves on our leadership and our scholastic achievement. It's a great group of guys. It's a great way to network on campus more. Sometimes it's hard to make those connections outside of class and that is just another avenue to get to know more people. I feel like it's very important to get involved on campus because then you feel that

connection with campus; you feel like you belong here," Slavens said.

Slavens said that the fraternity volunteers with the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation and has worked to board up abandon houses in neighborhoods throughout the Valley. Last semester, the group organized a pumpkin smash to help raise money.

Slavens said that the fraternity focuses on brotherhood and community involvement.

"With fraternity, I always talk about brotherhood. Part of that is them always looking out for you, helping you to be better. They are willing to say 'Hey, you messed up there.' It's not just a friendship. They are actually trying to help you become a better person. I think that's one of the overarching goals of fraternity life in general," Slavens said.

Slavens added that he wished he had been involved in the fraternity during his freshman year at YSU.

"It's freshmen year. You don't know your place yet and I think it has a special place for freshmen. It is a way to get to know so many more people. If I would've come in as a freshman, I think I would've gotten even more out of it and would've enjoyed it even more than I already have. I would encourage people to get involved as a freshman. You need those connections; you need those fun activities to keep your time occupied," he said.

O'Neill expressed his excitement to be a part of the fraternity.

"To me, it's a great honor to be part of it because I know how many high quality individuals are part of our organization and to be voted by them as president is very humbling," O'Neill said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDON O'NEILL

Members of the YSU Chapter of Sigma Tau Gamma help to clean neighborhoods in Youngstown through the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation.



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higher rate of admitted students are likely to choose not to attend. "It is harder for us to close the deal as you get outside of our traditional footprint and students know less about us — and they are coming from a distance where they might be expecting to live on campus and we have got a fairly limited number of spaces — then it becomes harder for us to yield them. So yes they can fill out the applications, but certainly as you get further and further away from campus, you would expect, a smaller percentage of those students would actually choose us," he said.

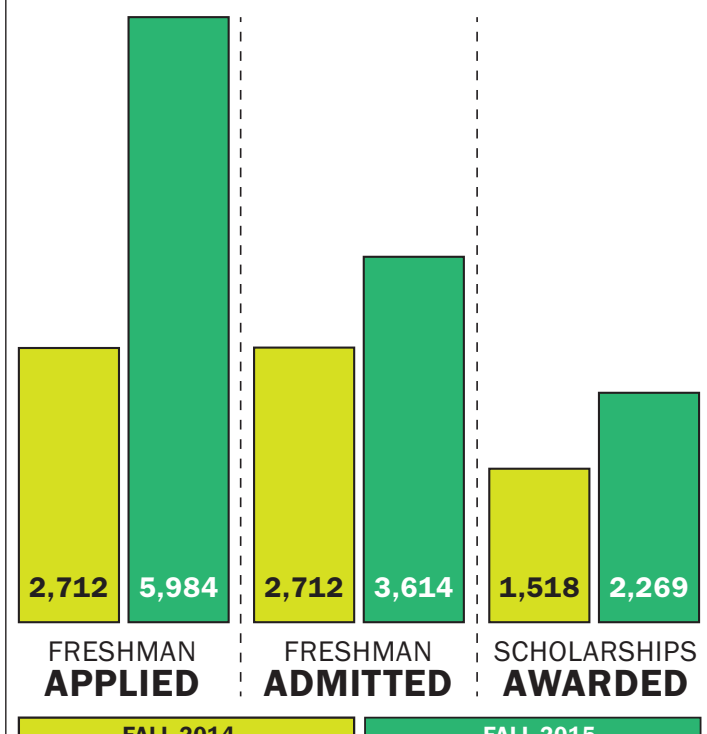
Swegan is hopeful that these enrollment goals will be reached — pointing to an increase in students who have preregistered for EARLY-SOAR, an early orientation and registration program in March.

"Probably most importantly, through yesterday, we were up about 23 percent preregistrations for the early SOAR program. So we are really putting a lot of focus particularly on the early date. The first three SOAR dates are this Saturday, next Tuesday and next Wednesday. And I expect the first three programs to have brought in almost 100 more students than the first three programs last year," he said. "That will be just the beginning, you know, because we want to be up 350 to 400 students."

Swegan said these improved admission statistics, and the potential enrollment increase, are not likely to save the university from its financial troubles, but the university is trying to develop an enrollment strategy that will have much greater returns down the road.

"When you have four straight years of down and you bring one class in that is big, you still have smaller classes in front of it. Our goal would be a much larger incoming first year class that would allow us to, I would say, stop the bleeding and maybe even get the needle turning back in the right direction in the overall enrollment. ... If you do that two years in a row, now you really start to see some momentum and that overall enrollment will incline exponentially," Swegan said. "There is never any guarantee, but I think what we are building right now is sustainable."

FALL 2014 vs. FALL 2015 UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION



Category	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
FRESHMAN APPLIED	2,712	5,984
FRESHMAN ADMITTED	2,712	3,614
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED	1,518	2,269

GRAPHIC BY STACY RUBINIC/THE JAMBAR.

Numbers above compare statistics from Feb. 24, 2015 and Feb. 24, 2014

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NEWS BRIEFS

Pre-Law Scholarship Available

Applications for the Judge Sidney Rigelhaupt and Bert Rigelhaupt Pre-Law Scholarship must be submitted by Monday, March 2. This is a full scholarship for YSU students of all majors who are intending to go to law school. It is renewable for underclassmen. Applications are available at www.ysu.edu/finaid, or can be found in the department of politics and international affairs office. Applications can be brought to this department or faxed to 330-941-3439.

Paula Poundstone at DeYor Performing Arts Center

Paula Poundstone, an award-winning comedian from National Public Radio's "Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me" radio program, will perform in the Ford Family Recital Hall at the DeYor Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$75 with a post-show reception and \$35. For more information, call 330-744-0264 or visit www.youngstownsymphony.com.

Clemency Performs at YSU

YSU Student Activities will present Clemency, a band from Yukon Oklahoma, on Thursday Feb. 26 from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. in The Hub in Kilcawley Center. This concert is part of Student Activities' "Concerts with a Cause" series, and will be spotlighting the Student Art Association at the show. The concert is free with a YSU ID and a cash bar is available for students who are 21+. For more information, visit the Facebook event page.

education that can be provided, so sure it's going to reduce the price to students, but it's also going to reduce the quality of the education students receive," Sumell said. "It's going to force colleges to have cutbacks which will negatively impact students."

He said increased subsidies would be a better way for the state to affect prices, noting that dramatic cuts in state support over the past 10 years have been the main cause of increasing tuition costs nationwide.

"You achieve the same outcome [with subsidies], but without any of the inefficiency associated with price controls," Sumell said.

Task Force Assembles

While Kasich's task force offers an alternative to Senate Bill 4, he is still imposing price controls, allowing tuition to rise two percent next year before instituting a freeze in the following year. He also suggested that further cuts could come if the task force was not successful.

"I reserve the right to say within the course of the next year, if they cannot enact these changes because of sclerosis in the universities, then I think you start just cutting funding and tell them to deal with it. But to me that's not the best way to do things, the best way to do things is to have a team of people committed to this common goal," Kasich said. "I would prefer in the course of this next nine months, 10 months, to give them a chance to do this before we take an axe to them."

McNally said rising healthcare and energy costs — things that can't necessarily be solved by increasing organizational efficiency — have placed pressure upon the university. He also noted that despite that, tuition increases at YSU have been below inflation on average over the last 10 years.

Sumell said increasing efficiency where possible is important, but costs are not the only thing legislators should take into account.

"If you can have a reduction in costs and [have] it not negatively impact the quality of education to students, then of course, it's a great idea, but that's not always going to be possible," Sumell said. "The presumption that lower costs are always better is actually not true, because we have to consider what's the loss in terms of quality of education to students."

McNally said he hopes the task force will avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

"Each university in the state is positioned very differently in terms of their academic mission, the students they serve, all sorts

of things. Miami University is a very different school than Cleveland State for instance, and you can go right down the line," McNally said. "So any sort of recommendation they have needs to take that into account ... because we're all doing something a little bit different."

Ohio Outperforms the Nation

Jim Lynch, communications adviser for Governor Kasich, noted that Ohio is already outperforming most of the country in this regard.

"The cost of tuition has skyrocketed across the country, and Ohio has done a very good job over the last five years of holding the line on tuition increases. I think there's only one other state in the country that's held the line on tuition increases more than Ohio," Lynch said.

Kasich also pointed this out in his press conference while touting recent changes made in the way resources are allocated and the move to performance-based funding.

According to Sumell, these achievements should allow legislators to ease the pressure on the state's public universities.

"You would think just based on the fact that we're doing better than any other state in the nation, as far as mitigating the impact of the state reductions to students, that we would be rewarded," Sumell said. "Something like, 'You've done such a great job. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to increase support and expect that you will reduce costs to students,' but instead it's, 'We're not going to increase support. We're just going to ask that you continue to cut costs to students and potentially ignore the impacts of continuing to cut costs.'"

He also said that if the pressure continues, the short-term focus on price could create significant problems for the state's higher-education system and economic development in the long term.

"The impact of those cuts could put us at a competitive disadvantage as far as the quality of our education system compared to other states, and that would eventually have an impact on our long-term development from an economic perspective," Sumell said. "So even if it helps us initially, maybe we can't actually hire the most qualified professors at these institutions anymore, or maybe the rankings of Ohio state universities go down and international students are less attracted to Ohio state universities as a result, or maybe just the quality of the education of students in Ohio decreases as a result, which maybe doesn't have a negative impact now, but would inevitably have a negative impact in the future."

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counting the fact that they're doing bonuses rather than putting it in base pay so that means it'll decrease my monthly retirement check after I retire. It's a bad contract," Porter said. "We will have a hard time hiring faculty at the wages that we have to offer. It'll be necessary for many departments at YSU to lower their standards to find faculty willing to take the salaries offered."

Porter accused the univer-

sity of having a problem prioritizing its spending in such a way as to reflect sincere concern over the salary concerns of the faculty.

"We gave back approximately 6 percent of our income in order for YSU to straighten out its own finances. Only three years later we find YSU in worse financial shape than before, but it has spent several million dollars improving athletic facilities. ... They tell me

they're broke and then spend money on a private dining room so student athletes can have a better diet," Porter said.

Ray Beiersdorfer, professor of geology and environmental sciences, said he believes apathy in the YSU-OEA ranks is the primary reason the contract passed to the Board of Trustees.

"If 17 people would have voted differently, it would have been rejected. My disappoint-

ment is in about 200 professors that didn't even bother to vote. There's such apathy ... it happened three years ago as well. I'm more disappointed in the fact that over half the faculty didn't vote. There's apathy at the polls ... voting on your contract is personally affecting you. If 17 people would have voted differently things would have been different. ... Nobody votes anymore, people are just disengaged from the whole process," Beiersdorfer said.

While the passing of the contract was a relief for many in the administration, President Jim Tressel spoke to the several union negotiations on the horizon for the university.

"Well, there are still union matters left to be resolved. Negotiations are still ongoing with ACE and come April we'll begin union negotiations with the police and administrators' unions," Tressel said.

YSU interim provost Martin Abraham was pleased that the faculty union negotiations had ended.

"I'm very pleased that we were able to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion and I'm looking forward to working with the faculty as we continue to move forward for the good of the university," Abraham said.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4
 6:30 P.M. • THE MCDONOUGH MUSEUM OF ART
RECEPTION AND LECTURE FOR VISITING ARTISTS

Kelly Eugene Phelps, associate professor and chair of Art, Xavier University, and Kyle Edward Phelps, associate professor of Art, University of Dayton, Ohio, present a joint lecture on their work, followed by a panel discussion. Their work encompasses the creation of traditional ceramic, sculpture, along with media art. Their research interest includes socio-political representation through the use of visual narratives and the human figure as image and ideal; other topics include race, class, and material meaning and process.



Both earned their BFAs from Ball State University in 1996 and their MFA degrees in in Ceramics from the University of Kentucky.

Co-sponsored by the College of Creative Arts and Communication

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6
 6:30 P.M. • GALLERY, KILCAWLEY CENTER
BLACK WOMEN AND THEIR HAIR
 A LECTURE ON BLACK WOMEN, HAIR CARE, AND BALDNESS BY MONICA BEASLEY-MARTIN



Black women value and love their hair and spend considerable time and resources to maintain a variety of styles that accentuate the natural beauty of African hair, fine and bold weaves, as well as dreadlocks. Then there's another style - the bald style, which can come about as a result of either too much chemical treatment, cancer, or a rare condition known as alopecia, which results in the loss of hair because the body is allergic to it. Monica Beasley-Martin was diagnosed with alopecia in her twenties. The resulting baldness led her to write *Bald is Beautiful*. Her lecture, along with Carmelia Williams, will cover care of hair for black women and her book. Monica is an ordained minister and a drama teacher who lives in Youngstown. A book signing will follow the lecture.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12
 5:30-6:30 P.M. • THE MCDONOUGH MUSEUM OF ART
LECTURE BY KEYNOTE SPEAKER, DAWOUD BEY

Dawoud Bey is a renowned American photographer, whose work has earned him great recognition and appreciation from professionals, reputable institutions and the general public. His large-scale color portraits focus on adolescents and marginalized subjects, with earliest photographs depicting the style of everyday life in Harlem. His recent Birmingham Project evokes the tragic events of September 15, 1963, where four black girls and two boys were killed in Birmingham, Alabama, in acts of racist violence. Bey began his career in 1975 with a series of photographs, "Harlem, USA," that were exhibited at the Studio Museum, Harlem, in 1979. His art has been exhibited in the Addison Gallery of American Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Brooklyn Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University.



Bey studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York from 1977-78, graduated with a BFA in Photography from Empire State College in 1990, and received his MFA from Yale University in 1993. He is a professor of Art and Distinguished College Artist at Columbia College, Chicago.

Co-sponsored by the McDonough Museum of Art

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14
 12:00 NOON • THE CHESTNUT ROOM, KILCAWLEY CENTER
THE AFRICAN MARKETPLACE

The African Marketplace brings together vendors and members of the community to celebrate African life in all its intensity. Come to enjoy sampling and purchasing diverse creations and products of African American artists and entrepreneurs. The African Marketplace attracts vendors from Ohio and beyond and enhances social connections of immense cultural value. Musical entertainment will be provided by the talented youthful Harambee dancers, and the Youth Choir of New Bethel Baptist Church in Youngstown.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17
 7:00 P.M. • OHIO ROOM, KILCAWLEY CENTER
LECTURE BY DR. OKAKAPIO DOKOTUM

Dr. OkakaOpio Dokotum, associate professor of Literature and Film at Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda, presents "Debunking the Myth of Africa, the Dark Continent." Dr. Dokotum is a poet, playwright and filmmaker. His scholarly research is on literature, film adaptation theory and the re-imagining of African literary scholarship through film adaptation studies. His publications include *Butterfly Dance, A Poetry Collection, and Atim Goes to the Village*. He is currently a Fullbright African Research Scholar at Northern Illinois University.



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23
 7:00 P.M. • THE OHIO ROOM, KILCAWLEY CENTER
THE MISSING LINK BY THE BONDAGE BUSTERS

Docudrama by the Bondage Busters, a youth group in Youngstown dedicated to the education and empowerment of African American youth. The group will showcase their activities that includes creative media drama on stage. Bondage Busters is led by Pastor Charles Hudson, a native of Youngstown who founded the group in 1989 in Crenshaw, California. Pastor Hudson teaches and supervises more than 100 kids at Luther's Lutheran Church in Youngstown. He targets gangs and other groups within city limits that draw children into a life of criminal behavior. Pastor Hudson and his assistants conduct counseling sessions, G.E.D. classes, athletic activities, and spiritual education. Pastor Hudson has received commendations for his outstanding work from Patrick Ungaro, former mayor of Youngstown, Randall Wellington, former police chief of Youngstown, and Ben McGee, former superintendent of the Youngstown City Schools.



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25
 6:30 P.M. • JONES ROOM, KILCAWLEY CENTER,
PANEL DISCUSSION: "WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?"

What do the following people have in common and what do they continue to say about our criminal justice system: Emmitt Till, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice and John Crawford III? Has over-criminalization and the jury system failed to deliver justice to victims of law enforcement? Panelists include members of YSU's Department of Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement and community leaders who will address the issues of law enforcement and race, and suggest ways of improvement. Members of the audience will be able share their experiences.



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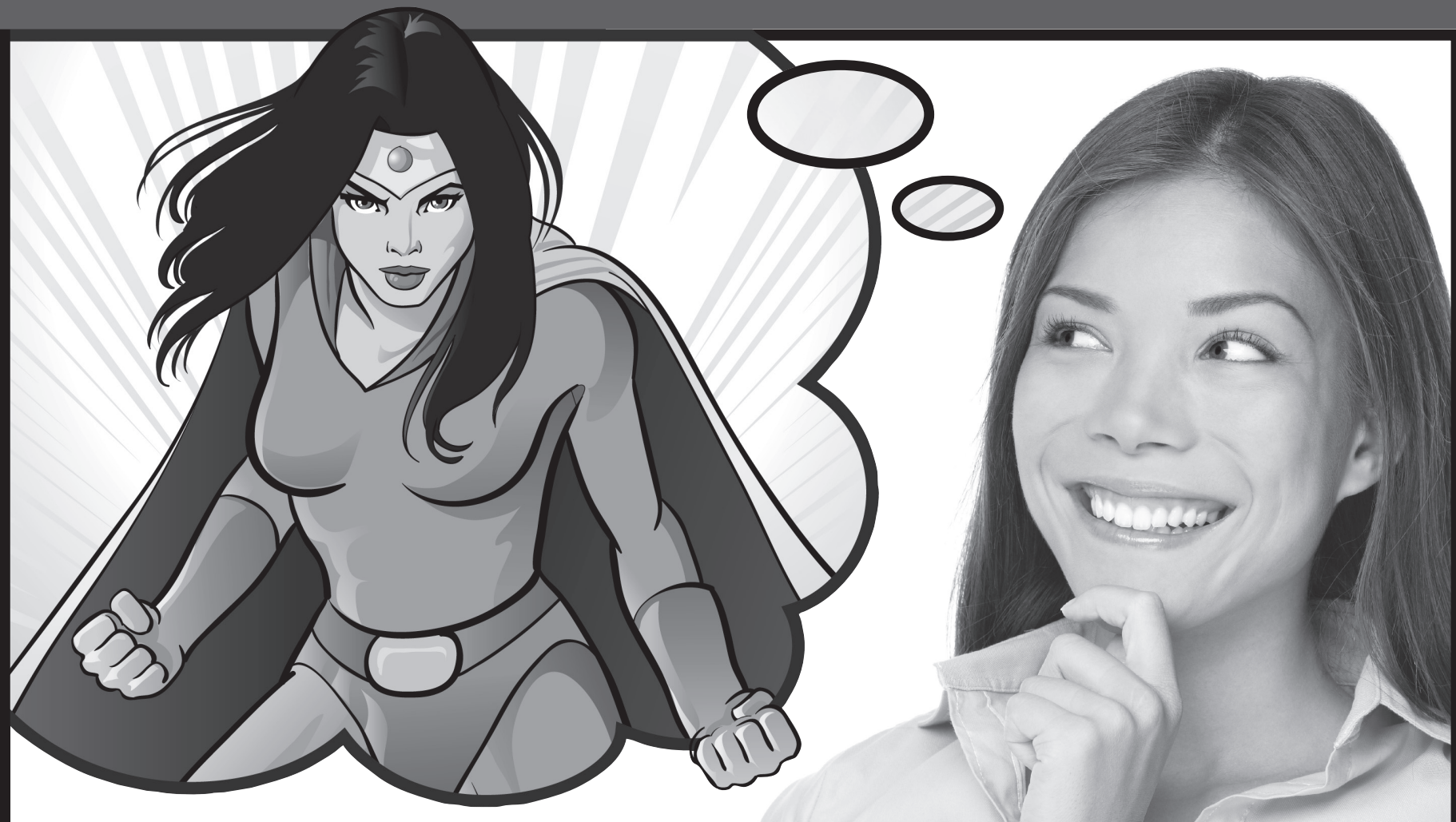


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International Folk Dance Program Debuts

BRIGITTE PETRAS
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The Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center at Youngstown State University is integrating a new cultural-orientated aerobic program Thursday, Feb. 26. The event will bring many different traditional styles of dance from multiple countries to life.

The program — “Dance Around the World” — is welcoming all students interested in actively learning international folk dances from 4-5 p.m. at the Rec Center every third Thursday of each month during this semester. The next session is scheduled to take place on March 26 and no previous dance experience is needed. Students can expect to learn two or three different folk dances each session.

“Dance Around the World” embodies traditional dances from around the world in a communal manner. Some dances will be in a circular formation where the entire group of dancers will be connected to each other and uniformly moving. Other dances will have students switch with different partners separately, while still being within the group.

Christine Cobb — YSU professor of theater and dance, and dance instructor for “Dance Around the World” — described the appeal of folk dancing.

“Everyone works cooperatively together to make [the dancing] work,” Cobb said. “It’s about having fun — mentally, physically and emotionally — all at the same time.”

Cobb has a strong background in folk dance, having toured Europe three times while performing within a folk dance company called American Heritage Dancers during college in the 1970s.

In the past years, Cobb used to teach an international folk dance class, but cannot currently fit it into her schedule. However, in Cobb’s survey of dance class that she teaches at YSU, she exposes her students to some Indian, European, African and American folk dances. She is confident that anyone attending the Rec Center event will enjoy it.

“Students really love communal dancing and it’s a great way to meet people. They feel like they’re connected in ways we don’t normally connect,” Cobb said.

Anna Pompeo, a graduate assistant at the Wellness Center at YSU,



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLOOD G./FLICKR CC BY 2.0.

described how the Rec Center decided to create a cultural dance program.

“Ryan McNicholas, my supervisor and the fitness and wellness programs coordinator, and I collaborated on an idea of how to incorporate international students with our Group X [drop-in] classes. We both liked the idea of using the physical and social aspects from the Nine Pillars of Wellness in a program that would also have a global/international twist,” Pompeo said.

Pompeo also explained that they

tossed ideas around with Cobb in November and finalized the aerobic program in December.

“She knew what types of dances were from which parts of the world, and we had the room to house the monthly dances, so the collaboration worked wonderfully and I am so grateful that she had an interest in the idea,” Pompeo said. “I wanted to attract not just the usual workout crowd that the Rec Center normally sees.”

YSU Honors Students Ace Talent Show

ALEXIS RUFENER
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Youngstown State University’s Honors Program kicked off their third annual Honors Talent Show at 7 p.m. on Tuesday.

The students spent the entire semester planning the show and putting together their acts. The advance preparations shone through as the honors students strummed their strings, waved their hands and projected their voices on the stage.

Kayla Zitello, a backstage crew member and planning committee member for the talent show, said she likes to think of the talent show as a way for honors students to escape from their schoolwork, while also helping raise money for Relay for Life.

“Stereotypically, honors students are seen as kids who spend all of their time studying, trying to make the grade. The talent show gives the performers the chance to show YSU that there is more to them than that, that they have other tal-

ents that they enjoy,” Zitello said. “It also gives the performers a chance to have fun and show their skills, and the audience a chance to support their peers and see the hidden talents that their friends and classmates may possess.”



PHOTOS BY STEVE WILAJ/JAMBAR.

Other planning committee members Alana Lanansky, Christine Langer, Natalie Halavick and Sara O’Kane met at the start of the year to begin planning for the event. The girls found honors students to sign up for the talent show and from there it was up to the students to choose their act.

“Some of the acts always surprise me,” Zitello said. “There is always someone who impresses me with their ability, and some of the acts can be unpredictable.”

From Joey Verbosky singing Frank Sinatra’s “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” to Christine Langer making four separate appearances on stage, the acts were as varied as they were entertaining.

Alana Lanansky performed her own jazz routine to Pat Benatar’s “Heartbreaker,” which ended with her jumping off the stage into an audience member’s arms. She said she believes that the talent show allows honors students to let loose and have fun between their strenuous classes.

“Everybody that’s performing [in the talent show] really has the love for performing and it’s really great to have an outlet for that,” Lanansky said. “I want them to feel the love that all the performers have. I want them to get a chance to ... realize that sometimes there’s the misconception that honor students just do school and that’s just not true.”

Youngstown Band Plans Career Paved With Originals

GABRIELLE FELLOWS
gabbymfellowsgmail.com

Mountain Kicker may be a newcomer in the local music scene, but the four-piece indie-rock group is already planning to make a mark in Youngstown and the surrounding areas.

Although Ben Ratner (bass), Jack Mocker (lead guitar), Evan Smith (drums) and Dominic Ferreri (rhythm guitar/vocals) formed Mountain Kicker on a whim, the group feels as if their

laid-back attitude toward making music will lend itself to be a saving grace in the current tightwad music scene.

Ferreri said he believes the ease of writing original music comes from the members’ overall attitudes and experience as musicians in the past.

“We’re writing like crazy — we’re on, I think, nine original tunes now? We all have an input with writing tunes. These guys are really awesome musicians and have really creative minds,” Ferreri said. “So far, out of the songs we’ve written, we’ve hit on five or six different genres. I hate putting us into a category this early in the band,

but we’re indie-rockish. The people that have heard some of our stuff have said we sounded like the early White Stripes, which I’m really cool with.”

Smith also said that writing songs seems to come easily for the band.

“For some reason, I don’t know why, it’s so easy for us to pump out originals. Everyone’s had their influences in the past, and bringing us all together makes it a lot easier to write songs,” Smith said. “We’re pumping out originals as fast as we can because ultimately, we’re not going to get anywhere as a cover band.”

Mountain Kicker is planning

to hit the recording studio in March to track some of the originals they have written for an EP.

“Once we get the demo out, we’re just going to be handing them out,” Ferreri said. “We aren’t going to be selling them. No one’s going to hear [the music] unless we put it out there. If we do make money here and there ... great. [We] do this because we love it. No one’s going to hear it unless we put it out there.”

Like any band, where Mountain Kicker will end up in the future is a bit of a mystery.

“Honestly, I don’t know where we’ll be in the future, but right now I’m just happy to

be playing music with friends,” Mocker said.

Ratner said he feels the same about the future of the band.

“The music industry is flooded with all these new talents. Back in the day there was only a few places people could go for their music and their hope to be famous,” Ratner said. “Now you can be famous and make a living being unheard of to some people and a godsend to others. As far as I’m concerned, as long as people are at our shows and we’re seeing their positive reaction to our music — that’s success.”

Retail Therapy is Real

AMANDA TONOLI
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In times of high stress rather than turning to talking about my feelings or doing something productive like starting a new project, I — like many other people of this generation — shop.

People who shop to relieve themselves of whatever worries and stresses they have going on in their lives have even coined the name “retail therapy.” Is this a real form of therapy though? Does it have actual psychological value?

In “Is Retail Therapy for Real? 5 Ways Shopping is Actually Good for You,” published in *TIME* in April 2013, Kit Yarrow discusses the topic of retail therapy — which more than half of Americans admit to participating in.

“Studies show that our unconscious mind continues to work out problems while we’re engaged in a different activity, provided we don’t switch over into tricky multi-tasking — juggling several things at once and not focusing on anything deeply,” Yarrow said.

Often all we need is a little getaway from reality, a distraction even — whether we find that distraction on a palm-tree-laced beach or a shopping complex in Ohio is immaterial.

“Psychologists have found that people tend to shop the most leading up to big life transitions,” Simple. Thrifty. Living. — a personal finance website — said in “Can Shopping Help Anxiety? The Psychology Behind Retail Therapy,” published in *The Huffington Post*. “For example, Americans shop the most during their lifetime prior to getting married and having a child.”

Shopping asserts more control over some type of situation, the article continued, easing potential or already on-set anxiety.

Shopping doesn’t even necessarily have to be done in

person to serve as a diversion.

“Online shopping is increasingly mentioned as a type of mini mental vacation,” Yarrow said. “It’s a relatively mindless, relaxing activity, and since many times the browsing session ends without anything being purchased, it’s often harmless as well.”

When you use shopping as an outlet for your stress however, it can turn into a problem or, even worse, an addiction.

Simple. Thrifty. Living. errs on the side of caution when it comes to retail therapy, for it affects one’s finances and budget greatly. They urge us to watch out for the most widely used defense mechanism: denial.

“Many individuals drowning in credit card debt have high rates of denial, and continue to spend when they can’t afford to,” Simple. Thrifty. Living. said.

However, if your shopping habit isn’t in danger of leaving a smoking crater where your 401k used to be, there are some positive outcomes — like the social aspect.

“Since the dawn of human society, people have gone to the marketplace to connect with other people,” Yarrow said. “If there’s one antidote to emotional distress, it’s human connection. We’re a species that’s meant to be with others. Whether that takes place over dinner, at home, or at the mall, it’s therapeutic.”

Sometimes I find myself at the mall, either by myself or with a few friends, just appreciating being around other people — not to mention people watching is fantastic.

Often I wonder if that’s why so many people wander in and out of trendy coffee shops to do work that can be done at home. Is this one of their few outlets for social interaction with others? In this light, they no longer look like attention-seeking writers, only able to author novels if others are watching. They are merely being human beings, hard-wired to crave connections with others.

JAMBAR POLICY

Since being founded by Burke Lyden in 1931, The Jambar has won nine Associated Collegiate Press honors. The Jambar is published twice weekly during the fall and spring semesters and weekly during the first summer session. Mail subscriptions are \$25 per academic year. The first copy of The Jambar is free. Additional copies of The Jambar are \$1 each.

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EDITORIAL

Rethink Revenge: Why Our Prison System Doesn’t Work

Eddie Ray Routh was convicted Tuesday for the 2013 killing of Chris Kyle — author of the autobiography “American Sniper” — and his friend Chad Littlefield at a gun range in Texas; the jury deliberated for just two hours before reaching a guilty verdict.

Wow, a news story that involves an American hero who famously suffered from PTSD and the mentally ill veteran that killed him, you say? This maelstrom of misfortune sounds like the perfect springboard to launch into the topic of the decade: mental health and the American prison system.

Certainly when a man kills an American hero, the jury’s decision should be a no-brainer; it shouldn’t take any longer than two hours to deliberate on his fate, right?

But things get a bit murkier when you consider the aforementioned fact that Routh was suffering from the same disease that plagued our war hero. A veteran of the Iraq war himself, Routh was known to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, medicine used to treat schizophrenia was found in his home. And even his victim Kyle acknowledged Routh’s compromised mental state, sending a text the day of his death that read, “this dude [Routh] is straight up nuts.”

Given this, we might expect a longer deliberation from the jury; we might expect an insanity defense to stick.

But — as an article by Abby Phillip published in the *Washington Post* explains — it’s very hard to demonstrate insanity.

“To surmount the odds, an attorney must demonstrate not mental illness but legal insanity. ... You can be insane, but if you knew at the time of the crime what you were doing was wrong, you’re cooked,” Phillip said.

Having recognized that killing Kyle was wrong on the night of his arrest when an officer asked, Routh was going to prison one way or another.

Routh is almost certainly — if not legally, then psychologically — insane, and, considering where he’s going, he won’t be alone. That same *Washington Post* article explains that “rates of mental illness in prisons are four to six times higher than in the general population,” and “some 14 percent of men and 31 percent of women in America’s prisons have serious mental problems.”

Remember the various controversies that swept the nation throughout the

20th century about the treatment of mentally ill in mental institutions? It is like the institution decided the best way to fix that is to dump them all into the already dysfunctional prison system. Surprise surprise, it isn’t going so well.

When a person’s mental ailments are so devastating they pose a threat to those around them, we understand that a person must be removed from society. But they need not be punished, and that’s exactly what our current criminal justice system does.

An op-ed by Martin Garbus — a litigator and constitutional lawyer — published on latimes.com details the horrific living conditions that exist in America’s jails and prisons. Our cells are overcrowded; inmates are subject to health problems, including bacterial infections and STDs; their cells can be freezing or sweltering; and they’re sometimes subject to solitary confinement — a punishment known to have profound mental effects on inmates.

An article by Adam Gopnik in *The New Yorker*, “The Caging of America,” corroborates the claims that punishment is still the de facto methodology of our prison systems, despite claims by the states and federal government to the contrary, saying that every day at least 50,000 men wake in solitary confinement and that every year 70,000 prisoners are raped.

Even if, for the most part, corporal punishment and its ilk have disappeared from prison systems, the fact remains that this system is an institution that punishes — if not in intent than in reality. Is not allowing 70,000 prison rapes to happen because of the structure of prisons a punishment in itself?

The question is why punish the mentally ill, correct? It makes absolutely no sense to punish someone who is not entirely in control of their own actions, who does not understand what they are being punished for, who is a victim to a disease that fundamentally alters their brain chemistry. You know what? To hell with it, it makes no sense to punish any criminals, mentally ill or not.

You know why? Because it simply does not work.

The same *New Yorker* piece states that the incarceration rate has tripled since the 1980s and a piece by James Gilligan in *The New York Times*, “Punishment Fails. Rehabilitation Works,” says that two-thirds of prisoners reoffend within

three years of release — an atrocious recidivism rate in a first-world country.

We can hear the counters to our plea: Why should we spend tax dollars on protecting those who break the rules of society? Why protect those who kill, rape and steal?

First and foremost, punishment should not be the role of the government. A traditional Western government is meant to maintain the rights of the people while allotting them responsibilities — such as following laws. When individuals break this contract, they must either be controlled or rehabilitated. For the government to step into the role of punisher and executioner is for it to step beyond its boundaries — a dangerous reality that we have been allowing for far too many years.

If ambiguous, and potentially sophomoric, political philosophy arguments are not your cup of tea then consider this: our system — in which prisoner comfort and rehabilitation is often the least of our concerns — is not cost effective. In the *New York Times* piece mentioned above, Gilligan points to a San Francisco jail that reduced the level of violence significantly with an intensive re-educational program using violent male offenders. The result was a reduction in recidivism by 83 percent, saving the state \$30,000 a year per person.

The illogical treatment of the mentally ill in the justice system is a symptom of a much larger problem. Certainly there are prisons, groups and individuals that care deeply about helping prisoners by offering serious and productive rehabilitation programs to prisoners, but even they are fighting the ethos of our corrections system.

And what of the prisoners, like Routh, who are too dangerous to even be released? Or even the violent, seemingly evil, prisoners who delight in their misdeeds? Again, though we understand the desire of victims and their family for punishment, it is not the role of their government to relish in punishing these individuals.

In the end, we wholeheartedly agree with Gilligan’s conclusion, “It would be beneficial to every man, woman and child in America, and harmful to no one, if we were to demolish every prison in this country and replace them with locked, safe and secure home-like residential communities.”

THE JAMBAR COM

Val Jeffery Tries Out for National Team

DAN HINER

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From Feb. 20-22, Youngstown State University volleyball player Val Jeffery tried out for the United States Women's National Team.

Jeffery and YSU head coach Mark Hardaway traveled to Colorado Springs, Colorado to join approximately 240 other hopefuls in an attempt to make the national roster.

Jeffery had a breakout season for the Penguins in 2014. She finished the season with her 1099 assists — the second most by a Penguin since 2007.

The tryouts were streamed live during the weekend and coaches and players around the country had an opportunity to view the players. Jeffery had an opportunity to compete against some of the top talent in the nation.

"I think I did well," she said. "It was really incredible to see how many good setters there were out there. For some reason when I play against really good athletes, for some reason I look at them and I see what they can accomplish and I immediately mimic it. It was really fun just competing with them. I thought I matched up well with them — maybe I didn't jump as high as them or as strong as them, but I thought overall I represented YSU as best I could."

Hardaway said that playing on the national stage would be good for not just Jeffery, but for the program overall.

"Even if she had to miss some of our training, the experience and the training and the level of play that she would get to experience would wash out the negatives. I think going here is going to make her better — it shows her where the top kids are," he said. "We also did it for her confidence. We do think she's good. There are times where she doubts how good she is, but she is very driven. She wants to be good and I really felt like it would be a good experience for her and it would make the program better in the long run."

Hardaway selected Jeffery to go to the national tryouts. Hardaway said it was a positive experience for his young setter.

"We thought that she was good enough that when she went out there she would be able to hold her own," Hardaway said. "As a setter you might be able to get away with not being as big or as physical depending on how good you are. But part of that process is that people know you and since no one knows her it is an uphill battle. That was the reason for going out there this year. It was to go out and see if she could hold her own and next year go out and really push to see if we could get her on one of those teams."



PHOTO BY DUSTIN LIVESAY/JAMBAR.

Sophomore setter Val Jeffery tried out for the United States' Volleyball team from Feb. 20-22. Jeffery recorded 1099 assists last season, the most assists by a Penguin since the 2007 season.

The official rosters could be released during the beginning of March. The 240 players that tried out have the opportunity to join four different teams. The national team will select the top players and the others will join one of the other three rosters that will play in international tournaments.

"They said they would send out invitations in

order of the teams. If you made the national team, those invitations would be sent out in the beginning of March," Jeffery said. "The one going to South Korea, China, and finally the last one, going to New Orleans, they will send out the invitations in that order. If you make the bottom team, which I think they will take 36 athletes, they'll send out an invitation at the end of March."

Track Prepares to Take Home Horizon League Title



PHOTO COURTESY OF YSU SPORTS INFORMATION.

Nina Grambling won the 60-meter dash with a time of 7.50 seconds at the Zips Invitational on Feb. 20. The Zips Invitational was a warm up meet provided by Akron University to prepare YSU for the Horizon League Championship.

JEFF BROWN

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The Youngstown State University women's track and field team is preparing to defend last year's Indoor Track and Field Horizon League Championship at the Watson and Tressel Training Site on Feb. 28-March 1. The women dominated last year's championship, winning by 80 points over the University of Detroit.

However, this year may be a little more difficult for the YSU women's team. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee will come into this year's championship as the slight favorites, but the Penguins are not far behind.

"On the women's side the way it looks is Milwaukee's women look on paper to be plus five to 10 points ahead of our women right now," head coach Brian Gorby said. "We lost some extremely strong seniors in Samantha Hamilton and Ciara Jarrett and of course we're hoping these freshmen can kind of step up in their spots."

If it were not for some early season injuries, the Penguins might be favored heading into this weekend's meet. The injuries are highlighted by the loss of the team's best thrower Jaynee Corbett to an ACL tear early in the season.

"She's been number one the whole entire year. From the very first meet without throwing anymore she's been number one in the shot and number one in the weight throw," Gorby said. "As I'm going to tell the kids, you can be either galvanized or give up. It's kind of like the Ohio State quarterback situation where they lost one, then they lost two and the first day we lost one, we lost two. We lost almost thirty points the first day on the women's side."

Sprinter and jumper Nina Grambling will be looked at to help carry some of the load for the

Penguins. Grambling won last year's Horizon League Championship in the 100-meter sprint and in the long jump, and is looking to repeat this year. Grambling is also going after the school record in the 200-meter and the facilities record in the 60-meter sprint.

"She's a phenomenal sprinter. She's actually better the first 40 to 60 meters of a race and that's why she's actually getting better and better. Her weakness used to be the 200 and 100, so over the past two years she has gotten better and stronger," Gorby said.

The men's track and field team finished runner up in last year's championship losing to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee by only 15 points, and are expected to be neck-in-neck with the Panthers again this year.

"It's going to be a two-team battle," Gorby said. "Milwaukee has won nine out of the last 10, but we beat them last year in outdoor. They know how to win championships and we know how to win championships."

The men's team features a talented distance team led by junior Austin McLean. McLean ran the second fastest mile in school history at the Alex Wilson Invitational hosted by Notre Dame last weekend.

"It was pretty tiring. I think I hit a wall from all the racing I've been doing, but I was really happy and I feel blessed to be able to get out there and go to Notre Dame and get the chance," McLean said.

Perhaps the biggest advantage for both the men and women's track teams is having the event on their home track where they practice every day.

"It's beautiful [being at home]. You don't have to travel," McLean said. "You're not sitting on a bus for six to 12 hours going somewhere getting off and feeling like crap after. It's nice to be able to walk a half-mile from home and get an adequate amount of sleep."