



## Students question Coke's ethics

**CHRISTOPHER NEWLAND  
AND MARIA CHERCOLES**  
Beacon Staff

The Student Government Association has decided to support a student campaign asking that the University think twice before renewing its contract with Coca-Cola this April.

The campaign – which has been named “Killer Coke” – is spearheaded by the United Students Against Sweatshops. Representatives from the organization say that Coke hasn’t been able to answer certain questions related to its labor practices abroad.

The Coca-Cola Company currently has a 10-year exclusivity contract with FIU under the terms that the contract will open for revision and bidding after its fifth year, which will occur at the end of this semester.

According to USAS, if the contract is terminated in April, FIU will not have to pay any compensation to the company. This is why the campaign is racing against time.

The club alleges that the company has been using more than its fair share of water in India, violating the country’s restrictions on how much can be used. They also say that the company has unfair labor practices in Turkey and the organization even alleges that Coke has hired paramilitary troops in Colombia to murder and scare union leaders.

USAS first presented its case to SGA two weeks ago, and Alfonso “Alfie” Leon, president of the Student Government Council at University Park, agreed to support the club.

USAS member Laura Garcia then gave a presentation at the council’s weekly meeting Feb. 21 and asked council members to volunteer and help conduct an extensive investigation on the company’s practices that will later be presented to University officials.

“The reason we ask SGA for support is because you are elected representatives and the University hears your concerns. It is easier for you to reach high officials [than for the average student],” Garcia said at the meeting.

At the end of the presentation, four SGA members agreed to volunteer in the newly formed committee. However, they preferred to remain anonymous.

According to Pablo Avendano, USAS president, the completed report will be presented to the Faculty Senate.

“FIU does not have the time or the money to conduct this report. Other universities even sent people to India to investigate coke’s operations. Since FIU can’t do this, we are asking students to help us conduct the investigation,” Garcia said.

As part of the new committee’s efforts, Leon and Camilo Silva, president of the Student Government Council at the Biscayne Bay Campus, signed and sent a letter to the company’s headquarters, located in Atlanta, Ga, Feb. 21.

The letter invites Coke to send a representative to a public forum at FIU and answer questions on the student’s allegations before the contract opens for revision. The letter also asks that the forum take place sometime in March, preferably March 13 or 14. Leon

## HIGH SPIRITS



CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

**THE GOOD BUBBLY:** A presenter dressed as a Greek nymph serves champagne at the Publix Grand Tasting Village, one of the main attractions at this year’s Food Network Wine & Food Festival. The annual event is partially produced by FIU. More than \$1 million were raised for the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. **SEE PAGE 2 FOR STORY, PAGE 6 FOR PHOTOS.**

## Election date change unconstitutional

**MARIA CHERCOLES**  
Asst. News Director

The Student Government Council at University Park recently moved the date of its annual election without properly notifying students, a decision that, though logistically convenient, violates the student government’s constitution.

The constitution, effective January 2007, dictates under article VII that the annual elections “will be held for two (2) days of the second week following Spring Break,” usually the third week of March.

This means the elections should be taking place April 4 and 5, the second week after Spring Break.

However, there has been a change in the date: this year’s elections will be held April 10 and 11, the third week after Spring Break.

Charlie Andrews, director of Campus Life, said that he specifically requested the postponement because the Campus Life staff will be attending a conference in Orlando during the original election dates. This staff supervises the election polls every year.

“We just didn’t see [moving the elections] as being such a major thing,” Andrews said. “We thought that most of the student body wouldn’t notice the change.”

Kathryn Cubbon, a member of SGC-UP’s judicial board, agreed with Andrews.

“Students don’t really care about when the elections are held,” Cubbon said.

However, according to professor of law Elizabeth Price Foley, who specializes in constitutional law, that is not the main issue.

“The two main things to look at are due process and opportunity to be heard,” she said.

Whether or not they think students really care, changing the election date without a proper notice, election, or public hearing

approved to move the elections.

When asked about not informing students about the change, Andrews acknowledged that there hasn’t been any public hearing, but added that he did talk to the students “most likely to run on the elections or to vote,” and that they did not have a problem with the change.

Leon said that in fact, there was a University-wide council meeting in which the issue was brought up and no one raised concerns, yet he couldn’t specify the date of the meeting.

Judene Tulloch, a member of the elections board, did not mention the University council meeting, but said that the decision was in fact announced during an SGA general meeting, and that this sufficed the requirement to make a public announcement.

“General meetings are considered public announcements. They are open to the public,” Tulloch said.

Despite the fact that the last meeting minutes posted on the SGA website date June 21, 2006, Tulloch referred to them as a communication channel between SGA and the students.

“We have minutes from every meeting. Anyone with questions is free to ask for them, but we can’t announce to our students every time we change a [letter from] lower case [to] upper case,” Tulloch said.

**“Judene Tulloch, Student Government Council - UP Elections Board chair**  
We have minutes from every meeting. Anyone with questions is free to ask for them, but we can’t announce to our students every time we change a [letter from] lower case [to] upper

skips some formal steps, depriving some students of their right to be heard and to vote, Foley said.

According to the student government constitution, any decisions infringing with the law require a general election. SGC-UP not only changed the date without consulting its constituents, but it did not inform them of the decision.

Andrews took responsibility for the issue, saying that the students did show concerns about the constitution infringement.

“I understand you are trying to make us follow the process, but we also have to be flexible,” Andrews said.

According to SGC-UP President Alfonso “Alfie” Leon, after Andrews requested the change, the council voted on the issue and



# GRE makeover to affect grad students

GRE, page 2

The essays will now ask students to take positions on given statements, then defend them while considering the ways in which the statement might or might not be true.

"The new test will measure skills more directly related to graduate study", Mintz said.

But there is still some good news about the changes: an on-screen calculator will now be made available.

ETS hopes that the revised GRE will have clearer scores, which will lead to improved prediction of future success in graduate school. The new test will be safer and more "test-taker friendly," according to the ETS's website.

ETS also announced important changes to dates the exam will be administered.

The last day to take the current version of the test is July 31, with only limited registration. Perhaps more problematic is the fact that the exam will no longer be offered in August.

According to the ETS's website, registration has been limited to ensure ample time for the transition from the old to the new version of the test, and to guarantee that the population taking the new test will be representative to

calculate the new score scales.

To study for the new test, ETS offers free preparation materials on their website.

However, Mintz advises that practicing won't guarantee a perfect score.

"Some practice is always useful but success will reflect what a student has learned over a lifetime," Mintz said.

Instead of year-round continuous testing, the new test will be given approximately 35 times a year worldwide. The number of testing dates in each region will depend on each region's test volume.

For those planning to attend FIU's graduate school, FIU will be hosting a Graduate Open House March 3 in the Graham Center Ballrooms at 10 a.m.

The event will begin with a general information session highlighting what to expect from FIU's Graduate School, according to Nanett Rojas, Graduate School coordinator.

After the information session, students will have the chance to meet with representatives from various departments.

For more information on the GRE, go to [www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre). For more information on FIU's Graduate Open House visit <http://grad-school.fiu.edu/>.

# SGA ignores process

ELECTIONS, page 1

Foley believes that notifying the student body of changes like this one, which could lead to dishonest practices, is still necessary.

According to Foley, it's not a matter of whether the issue is that important or not, but rather of how serious student government takes its constitution.

When compared to the U.S. constitution, the SGA constitution might not seem as formal or as important, yet it is the document by which the University's student government abides, she said.

"If you are going to take politics seriously, abide by the plain text," Foley said. "If our president violated the U.S. constitution under the same terms, it would obviously raise con-

cerns. That's just not a good signal."

Another, more serious question is whether disregarding the constitution for this issue could lead to other, more serious infringements.

"Leaders who disregard regulations are leaders you have to keep in mind, because they'll do it again ... It applies to any president," Foley said.

The election date has never been moved before, said Andrews, who mentioned that the issue opened conversations about the strictness of the constitution, and whether there should be a clause allowing date changes in case of emergencies.

Leon agreed, saying that a new SGA constitution with a clause about the election dates will be approved soon.

# Coke's ethics questioned

COKE, page 1

explained during the SGA meeting that the report should be completed before the bidding begins because only financial questions and advantages will be discussed during the meeting, so it is up to the students to question the company's practices. FIU is not the first university to question Coke's operations abroad. The University of Michigan has suspended all Coke sales on its campus until a third party confirms that Coke has had no involvement in questionable practices.

According to a fact sheet sent to The Beacon by Kirsten Witt, a Coca-Cola representative, the company has conducted business with Colombia for 70 years.

"For as long as we've been in Colombia, Coca-Cola has supported programs that aid children, promote education, and bring relief to victims of the country's ongoing conflict," the document said. "Earlier this year, we provided \$10 million to start the Colombian Foundation for Education and Opportunity, an organization that addresses the needs of victims of violence."

The document also says that judicial inquiries performed in a Colombian court and

another by the Colombian Attorney General found a lack of evidence to support allegations that bottler managements intimidated trade unionists.

"Over the past several decades, Colombia has experience much internal conflict, which affects trade union leaders in many industries and other people from all walks of life. Despite the volatile environment, the Coca-Cola Company and its bottlers have maintained operations and have worked to provide safe, stable economic opportunities for the people of Colombia," one of the document's bullet points said.

It also made clear that products manufactured in Colombia are meant for consumption in that country and are not exported to the U.S.

To read the complete letter sent to the Coca-Cola Company, go to [www.beacon-newspaper.com](http://www.beacon-newspaper.com).

For more information on the committee, contact SGA at the Graham Center, room 211.

For information on the Coca-Cola's foreign policy, visit [cokefacts.com](http://cokefacts.com)

-Additional reporting by C. Joel Marino, Beacon staff

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